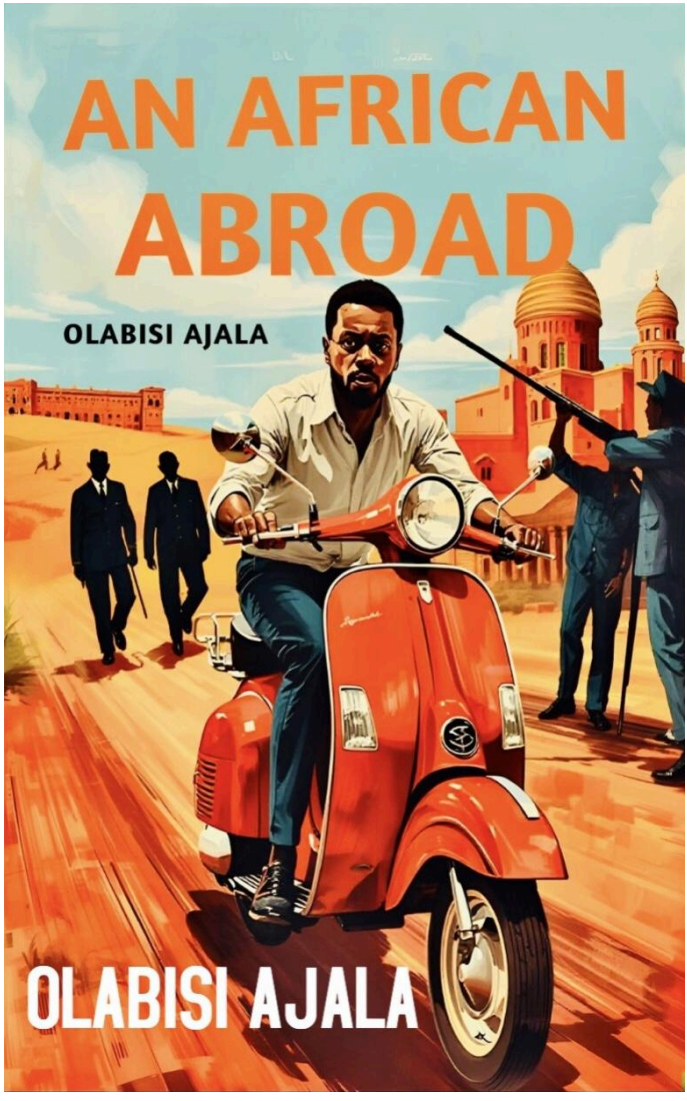
AN AFRICAN ABROAD
OLABISI AJALA
OLABISI AJALA

Olabisi Ajala

An African Abroad

Introduction by T. J. Mboya, Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs Kenya

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An African Abroad by Olabisi Ajala

After early education in Africa and working his way through various colleges in America, Olabisi Ajala, a young Nigerian, determined to see the world in his own particular way. He bought a motor-scooter and, armed with a camera, journeyed across Europe and Asia and finally arrived in Australia.

During his travels he made up his mind that he would see as many of the political leaders as he could, and the gate crashed everywhere (sometimes literally as through the Jordan-Israeli frontier) and his persistence was well rewarded. He tells us of his meeting with Kruschev, with the Shah of Iran, with Mrs Meir, with Nasser, with Nehru and others, and about all these people he has something acute and perceptive to tell, though the book is much more than an account of successful tuft-hunting. Ajala looks at the world with unprejudiced gaze. He tells us why he liked or disliked such and such a people or country and though much of what he says is of course, controversial, it is never dull or commonplace.

An African Abroad is a unique book:
unique for its deep sincerity, its fresh viewpoints, and its lack of prejudice. Possibly only an African could have written so illuminatingly about the countries and peoples he has visited.

Introduced by Tom Mboya
Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Kenya

To the many friends I have made during my journey, and particularly to the following people who have helped me in various ways:
My mother
Mrs. Jean Pratten, Lismore, Australia Fatima Joedokoesoemo, Djakarta, Indonesia Mildred Bush, Hunter City College, New York City Patricia Weeks, Highgate, London Dorothy I. Powell, Sydney, Australia
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Introduction

For several hundred years Africa suffered under the yoke of imperialism. Naturally enough it was in the political and social spheres that colonial domination was most clearly expressed. Nevertheless the inhibiting effect of colonial control upon the cultural development of the people should not be ignored. Much that was of aesthetic value in our traditional societies was deliberately suppressed. The conditions of political and social oppression were hardly an encouraging climate for artistic expression, experiment and development.
Now, during colonialism's twilight in Africa, a new spirit is stirring throughout the continent. The leaders have made it clear to the people that political independence is not an end in itself. Rather does it give the men and women of Africa a chance to develop their talents to the full.

It means that we can work hard and with dignity to bring economic prosperity. It means that we can face up to the challenge of removing our great enemies, poverty, ignorance and disease. It means that we can set about creating new societies—African societies—and a new culture—African culture.
During the period of foreign domination such artistic expression as existed among Africans was understandably

preoccupied with the immediate problems presented by that domination.
Thus it was that the more common forms of artistic activity were in the creation of patriotic songs, designs, paintings, in political and biographical writings.

As we achieve our freedom the beginnings of a new flowering of culture in Africa are becoming apparent. Our philosophers, writers, artists, musicians, architects, dancers and sculptors are drawing both from our own rich past and from the skills, technicians and techniques of Europe and Asia.

Great advances have been made in the literary fields. In East Africa Kiswahili poetry flourishes. A number of important philosophical works have been produced, mainly in the French-speaking territories. Exciting new novelists have appeared in the last decade or so all over the continent.

It would be difficult to place the present work in a strict category. From its title and its form it is a travel book. But it is much more than that. Mr. Ajala brilliantly describes a number of important events and interviews, but it is more than mere journalism. He discusses a number of political issues, ranging from the White Australian policy to the Arab-Israeli dispute—but it is more than a polemical dissertation.

As he travels back and forth across the continents on the two wheels of his motor-scooter, the author skillfully describes to us the psychologies and the sociology of the fascinating individuals and groups he meets.

I am happy and proud to be able to write these few lines of introduction to this newest addition to the growing library of African writings.

26th July 1963
Nairobi, Kenya

(signed).

Foreword

The reader, as he turns the pages of this book, the first of a trilogy, may surmise that it is a travelogue. However, it is more a work about Man, his culture and traditions, failures and achievements, love or hatred for his fellow man, and, above all, the ignorance of Society. I have endeavoured to praise or criticize, when necessary, without bias or ill feeling.

I was born in Ghana, of Nigerian parents, and brought up in Nigeria, where I had my schooling at the Baptist Academy, Lagos, and Ibadan Boys' High School. At the age of eighteen I went to America to further my studies.

My father, a traditionalist who belongs to the old school of thought, is a humble and devout Moslem. We do not see eye to eye in matters of religion, even though I was born into the Moslem faith. I went to America with the blessing of my mother and against the wishes of my father.

I had several ideas about life and my future, and I felt that to achieve them I would have to leave the society which I had come to know and love so well. I was able to do this thanks to my uncle, Mr. S. B. Ajala, who paid my boat- fare across to New York.

"This hundred pounds,' said my uncle, as he handed me the money, 'is to pay your way to America and cover your expenses until you find your feet. May Allah be with you.'

My passage from Lagos to New York via Marseilles cost £98. I landed in New York City in August 1948 without a penny to my name. I had no money coming to me from home or from anywhere else. I was now on my own in a strange land. I worked my way on a one-year Lutheran scholarship through Augustana College at Rock Island, Illinois, later through Roosevelt University in Chicago and finally through Columbia University in New York City.
During these years I worked in hospitals as a night orderly and morgue attendant, and as a dish-washer in restaurants. Each summer I went to Hollywood to work as an extra in films. The money I earned was enough to cover my expenses.
From America I went to Canada (where I spent a couple of years) and later on to Britain. In 1957 I began my one-man Odyssey around the world. It is still going on as I write this in Sydney, Australia.
In nearly all the eighty-seven countries I have visited during the course of my six-year jaunt around the world [ranging from North America to Eastern and Western Europe, through Africa and Asia and as far east as Korea, Indonesia and Australia] I have observed many different political regimes both in democratic and communist states.
I have met with brutality and racial intolerance. I have felt the bitter evil of Man's inhumanity to Man, and have marvelled at the goodness of the humane- hearted. I have

seen the iron hand of military, autocratic and monarchical dictatorships grinding down on less fortunate peoples. Most important of all, I have seen the practical sides—good and bad—of both democracy and communism.
This book, I should point out, is not meant to accuse or place on trial these dignitaries we all know only too well. On the contrary, its main purpose, besides commenting on diverse cultures, is to unfold before the eyes of the reader the characters of a few of the leaders and to share my conversations and my observations on their mentality.
In the course of my travels I have met and exchanged views with most of these controversial statesmen, including Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union, Gamal Abdul Nasser of the United Arab Republic, President Soekarno of Indonesia, Pandit Nehru of India, Ayub Khan of Pakistan, Diosdado Macapagal of the Philippines, Mrs. Bandaranaike of Ceylon, the Shah of Iran, Tunku Abdul Rahman of Malaya, Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia, Archbishop Makarios of Cyprus, the late Abdul Karim Kassem of Iraq, Sir Garfield Barwick of Australia, Mrs. Golda Meir of Israel, Chiang Kai-shek of the Republic of China and Pak Chung Hee of Korea, just to mention a few. Some of these you may read about in this book. In many cases the manner in which I have met them has been described 'unorthodox and suicidal'.

What are these people like in private life, if they have one? Are they any different from, say, you and me? Individually, are these men sensitive, sympathetic or gregarious? Are they unapproachable and ruthless? What are they really—clowns

or heroes? What causes the mere mention of some of their names to generate fear and insecurity, while the names of others symbolize confidence and loyalty?

Without the sometimes reluctant co-operation of most of these 'controversial figures' the writing of this book would not have been possible. To these statesmen, then, I extend my heartfelt thanks.

Above all, I am deeply grateful to my wife Joane, who made most of the corrections and edited the original manuscript. She has given me inestimable help and encouragement.

OLABISI AJALA
Rose Bay, Sydney, Australia

PART ONE

INDIA

1 *Sojourn in India*

IT IS quite safe to say the worst and the best about India and Indians. Without being biased or unduly critical, one can identify Indians as appallingly ignorant savages, yet they belong to one of the most highly cultured and literary societies in the world. One can further describe India as the most hideous and, at the same time, the most colourfully fascinating of countries—in brief, every possible antonym may be used to classify and dissect this part of the world, and none will be far from the truth.
The intolerable mass poverty of Calcutta and Bombay—where over a million homeless people in ragged clothes sleep in filthy streets and lanes—is a living horror. In Bombay, with its streets of sin and bootlegging, I saw the sickening sight of hundreds of beautifully clad professional prostitutes and arrogant pimps. The slums and back alleys of Old and New Delhi swarm with religious bigots, masses of crawling beggars, trained pickpockets and many other types- of human parasites. Again, the filthy yet glowingly beautiful cities of Madras and Banaras are two further examples of horrifying contrasts.

The world of India-Pakistan, otherwise termed the subcontinent of Asia, as I saw it after my three-month stay there in 1960, was one of mystery and dejection coupled with breath- taking culture and rich traditions.

While most of the wide and corrugated highways, city streets and slum alleys of India appear to be infested with and ruled by such sacred animals as cows, the varied faces of the Indian populace are an impressive object of study. These fascinating faces vary from those of snake-charmers, fanatical Hindus, contortionists, bearded Moslems and heavily turbaned Sikhs to those of almost naked religious leaders.

From Karachi through to Calcutta and across to Chittagong in East Pakistan, one inherently disturbing habit of the people, which is an eyesore to a foreigner, is the disgusting and unhygienic manner in which they use red betel-leaves as 'chewing gum'. When employed as it is by men, women and children of practically all ages, the 'chewing gum' produces a flaming red liquid which saturates the lips, tongue and teeth, and drips down the chin.

Despite her ignorance and misery, India stands out in my memory as a land of enviable traditions and culture, no doubt familiar to the reader.

With the outstanding exception of its well-mannered Prime Minister, Jawaharl Nehru—who received me for more than forty-five minutes at his palatial residence only three days after I arrived in New Delhi from Lahore—most of the Indian people I met, including high government officials, were snobbish and intolerant, with detestable and annoying habits. For example, you are startled out of a pleasant sleep

at 5 a.m. by the sound of someone who appears to be vomiting and in obvious agony at the wash-basin. You get up, full of sympathy and ready to help, only to find someone cleaning his teeth and cheerfully clearing his throat with the most disgusting sounds. Again, at a movie theatre, a few minutes before the end of the film, half the members of the audience jump unceremoniously to their feet. In their haste to be out first they stand waiting for the film to end, blocking the view of everyone else.

While I was in India I covered 6,500 miles on my motor-scooter, which took me through Amritsar, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and a few other important cities and many towns and remote villages through the vast green and fertile land. I came into India- Pakistan with no special destination in mind, nor with any special group of people I wanted to meet. As in the other countries which I had seen before coming to India, I moved, chatted and exchanged views freely with Indians and Anglo-Indians of different classes, religions, cultures and from all walks of life, including Sikhs, Moslems, Pagans, Hindus and Christians. I found the average man unlike Mr. Nehru, with his reserved, shy and accommodating manners. Most of them, including Civil Servants and frontier immigration and passport officers, were frightfully unco-operative, unapproachable and rude. The average Indian was colour-conscious without being exactly discriminatory. Some colour-complex seems to be inbred in him.

Pandit Nehru is probably one of the greatest of statesmen in the world today. Face to face with him, I felt that he was unselfconsciously shy, timid and
unusually moody. He has a cautious personality, and impressed me as a man of honesty, a man very conscious of Man's psychological dilemma.

'Welcome the foreigners as guests and friends' is the remark on posters commonly seen in all parts of India. Adjacent to the inscription one sees a large photograph of Mr. Nehru with his signature prominently displayed under the inscription. Premier Nehru realizes the hostile and unco-operative attitude of his countrymen towards foreigners, and has gone to the length of publicly appealing to his people to display courtesy, kindness and understanding to foreign visitors in India. Yet I cannot say with all sincerity that this appeal by Mr. Nehru has had any effect on the inhabitants of India to whom it was directed. Often, in the course of my trip through India, I asked for road directions from educated and English-speaking Indians and was ignored or told 'I am not a policeman to give directions' and was made an object of ridicule by any bystanders.

You walk up to a uniformed policeman to ask a question and he points out to you by hand gestures that he can't understand English. So you ask a group of men, who are standing by and speaking in English, for their assistance. You are looked upon suspiciously and ignorantly. Briefly and slowly, they dangle their heads and walk away, leaving

you, another perturbed foreign tourist, standing alone, wondering why. Not once, but a number of times such incidents occurred to me. Here lies the shame of India. I view the efforts of Mr. Nehru as sincere and meaningful, but I cannot get away from the opinion that the Indian public is like a crowd of reluctant people being sympathetically coerced against their will to drink water from a fountain. I am convinced that the average Indian is not in the least concerned with the opinion a foreigner may hold of him regarding his inhospitable and revolting manners.

Strange though it may sound, most of the kind and under. standing attention I received in India was from people inhabiting remote villages and farms. In nearly all these villages I was welcomed and quite often provided, free of charge, with bed and board. These farmers, villagers and peasants could hardly understand my language, yet they were able to appreciate the common fact of human dilemma and necessity.

Much as I hate to admit it, in India I was subjected to humiliation and embarrassment because of my colour. In Calcutta I was on a number of occasions denied admission to social clubs and public restaurants such as the famous Mocambo and Sky Room clubs and the Barba-Que Restaurant. The management of these clubs made no secret of the reason for their refusing to serve me. On each occasion that I was at these restaurants and refused admission, I had to muscle my way to the table against the

wishes of the management and insist on being served. In each instance I was threatened with forcible ejection and arrest, which often resulted in an exchange of bitter words before I was manhandled.
I remember an incident which took place in Calcutta one evening. I got into a taxi driven by a turbaned Sikh. We went to three reputable Hindu-owned restaurants, where I was refused service. The taxi-driver was most disappointed and expressed his regret. He made it clear to me that the discriminatory attitudes shown to me in the plush restaurants was not customary with the Indians. He offered to take me to another restaurant. It was now getting close to midnight. 'I will take you to a Moslem restaurant near the big market, very good food and very good people,' I enquired from him his opinion of Moslems. 'You must remember that we are all worshipping one God. Moslems in this country are good-hearted. We are all brothers and we must live like that. The partition of India and Pakistan is the greatest damage to our heritage.'

I was deeply impressed by his sincere remarks. Apart from such heartening exceptions, the hostile and unfriendly behaviour of the Indian public was an unforeseen disappointment which greatly shocked me

The impression one receives of the Indian abroad takes another shape. Abroad, he is cool, reserved, cautious and mixes hardly at all except with his own countrymen. He is unpredictable and noncommittal and lives a life of

loneliness away from his neighbours, house-mates and even class-mates.

Negroes and Indians walking along hand-in-hand or engaging in friendly conversation in the streets of London or New York are unheard of. For some reason they remain sworn and silent antagonists. The psychological motive for this behaviour has always been beyond my comprehension. The dedicated and rapid progress being made by the Indian Government towards mass education and industrialization, and, above all, the preservation of her rich cultures and customs, is a source of pride and credit to India and Indians of all classes.

Before my visit to India I had been made to believe that there was violent oppression of and disrespect for Indians who were not of either Hindu or Sikh religious origin and belief. In addition, I gathered that people of Indian origin born of Anglo-Indian parents were often denied basic human rights, including posts in government services. They were reported to be considered and treated as second-class citizens. To a large extent I found these remarks to be absolutely unfounded. In India I discovered that Moslems and Christians have a lot in common with Hindus and Sikhs. In the Union Parliament in Delhi the members come from all walks of life. Moslems and Christians hold Ministerial and Under- Secretary posts, including State Governorships. The same goes for the Civil Service. I found that officials include Moslems, Christians, Pagans and

Hindus. All work side by side and often engage in jokes together.
I have seen and even eaten at a number of restaurants owned and operated by Moslems, yet much patronized by Indians of different religions, and I was told that a comparable situation occurs in Hindu-owned restaurants.

While I was in India tremendous efforts were being made by the government to raise the standard of the people's living conditions. Great improvements in modern agricultural production as well as industrial output were being made. Gigantic apartment buildings, factories, dams, hospitals, orphanage centres, schools and technical institutes, for the youth, aged and underprivileged, were constantly and swiftly being built and established in place of slums all over the country. There is no doubt that the Government of India, despite the huge population of the country, is working very hard in an endeavour to provide comfort and healthy surroundings for its people.

What is unique and deserves great credit is the preservation of cultures, arts and traditions, despite years of foreign rule and domination which threatened their destruction. Marriage ceremonies are spectacular and colourful. The arts of music, painting and dancing and indigenous folklore are thriving. They are tastefully presented and are fascinating to a foreign visitor, particularly if he comes from Europe or America.

Many people besides myself have commented on the hordes of prostitutes and beggars, who have become a terrible source of embarrassment for the government and the public, and who are being discouraged from following their profession. It must be remembered that the arts of prostitution and begging remain the oldest professions on earth and cannot be easily and successfully wiped out. They exist in various shapes and forms in every country on earth, including America, Britain, Russia, Nigeria and Ethiopia, to mention only a few. The Indian Government is to be credited for its endeavour to rid the streets of these poverty-stricken and underprivileged people, but I believe that it can succeed in suppressing these debased institutions only when adequate provision has been made to provide for the economic and social needs of these dejected and unhappy people. It is just not enough to say that the streets should be cleansed of beggars and prostitutes without actually doing something to satisfy their needs, including hygienic living quarters and employment.

Unlike the Indian shop-owners abroad, the Indian at home does not indulge in making undue and excessive profit from innocent foreign tourists or strangers, as so often is the case in Africa, Europe and parts of Asia. A number of times I went out to buy goods, including souvenirs, and found to my amazement that I was either asked to pay the marked cost price or given 20% reduction of the price 'because you are a tourist'. This happened to me a number of times in reputable shops. My reader will want to know how this behaviour can be reconciled with my earlier comment on

the non-co-operation shown towards foreigners by Indians, and I must admit that this remains an enigma to me.

Red tape such as the strict observance of formalities and the detailed scrutiny of documents was another handicap with Indian officials, beside the undue rudeness and humiliating behaviour of Customs and passport officers towards foreign tourists, especially those entering India from the frontier of Indo-Pakistan and vice versa.

I, like many others, was detained on the Indian side of the border for a good six hours and for no apparent reason. While I protested against the long delay, the officials sat down, leisurely sipping tea on the green lawn of the border, which looked like a picnic ground. They will tell you as they told me: 'We have all the time in the world.' Very comforting to a weary traveller. Later, detailed examination was made of my baggage and of the clothes I wore. Even my scooter was stripped down, including the engine.
I must relate here the account of a shameful and humiliating incident which occurred to me in Calcutta two days before my departure for Burma via East Pakistan.

The embarrassing incident in question resulted in my being arrested, charged, duly tried and acquitted at Calcutta's First Presidency Magistrate Court. On the night of the incident I was in the company of two African students. One of them was Wadada Musani, who came from Uganda, and the other his room-mate, whose name I can't recall, who told me he came from Kenya. Both of them were

scholarship students at the Calcutta Medical College. I was dressed in my Nigerian 'Agbada', my two friends were attired in European outfits. They had taken me on a visit to the Medical College. We were now returning to my hotel on Chowringhee Street through one of the slum districts of Calcutta. I was later told that the district was an area usually infested and frequented by all sorts of shady characters, including pimps, prostitutes and small- time crooks. It was called Bowbazar Street—one of the narrow roads. Suddenly a group of civilian-dressed men, each carrying a short heavy stick, accosted us. "We want to see your identification documents, we are police,' one of them said. It was about 7 p.m. and becoming dark. I demanded in a cool and reserved voice to know the reason behind their request. 'After all, we are not in Little Rock, U.S.A., or in a communist state,' I added.

They were twelve in all, and only one of them spoke English, the rest speaking Bengali. Because we refused to identify ourselves we were ordered to get into a police truck making for the police station. Without being given any chance to walk to the truck we were rough-handled and pushed along, and hit by the sticks in their hands. I went over to one of the officers manhandling my friends and hit him with a stone I had picked up. They became furious and all savagely set upon me, raining heavy blows until I became unconscious. When I came to I found myself alone in a lock-up, lying in a pool of water.

I was charged, along with my two friends, with 'obstructing and fighting the police in the course of their duty'. I pleaded that my friends should be left out of the charge, as they had not taken an active part in the fight. I did this in order to protect the reputation of my friends, as I realized that they were students in India, and in addition had not in fact taken part in the fiasco. The inspector-in- charge agreed to release all three of us if we would not relate an account of the incident to the Government of India. I insisted that I should be charged and my friends released, and promised to see to it that they would not appear in court to testify on my behalf. I wanted the case to go to court, but at the same time not to get my friends involved. The inspector agreed. My friends were released, while I was charged and detained.

The incident occurred on a Saturday night and I put in my appearance in court on the following Monday before a robust and heavily built magistrate. None of the police officers, including the sub-inspector who arrested and charged me, showed up in court. Their names were called several times. The charge preferred against me in court was contrary to the original charge on the night of the arrest. This time I was accused of 'disorderly conduct and fighting with a Moslem-Indian'. It was a fake and distorted charge. The magistrate knew this as soon as the 'Moslem-Indian' that I was supposed to have fought was produced and gave his evidence. After the 'Moslem-Indian' and I had finished giving evidence the magistrate sentenced him to 'five days' imprisonment with hard labour for giving perjured evidence'. I was set free with honourable discharge.

Here is the comment of India's widely read *Daily Statesman* on the court proceedings. It was headlined 'African Tourist Acquitted':

'It should be the duty of the police to ascertain facts before arresting a person, more particularly a foreigner, whose integrity and honour are to be respected. With these observations', stated the *Daily Statesman*, dated Thursday 13 January 1961, 'Mr. Shiva Kumar Khana, Presidency Magistrate, released Mr. M. O. Ajala, an African world tourist now staying in Calcutta, who was arrested in a lane off Bowbazar Street on a charge of disorderly conduct and riotous behaviour by shouting and fighting with an Indian-Moslem, thereby creating a disturbance. The trial took a turning point when the Indian-Moslem stated in court that he was asked by the police to give evidence, as he was not present at the trouble spot. The Indian was sent to prison. As Mr. Ajala pleaded not guilty and the police inspector, Dh. Mukarji, who levelled the charges, was not present in court, although his name was repeatedly called, the magistrate discharged the Nigerian under Section 249 of the Criminal Procedure Code.'

When I was in India there were more than 3,000 African students pursuing higher studies in Indian universities. While most of them came from East Africa, others came from countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone. In every major city I visited where there were universities, such as New Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, there were African students. The majority of them

gave me an unpleasant impression of frustration, unhappiness and a deep regret for having made their way to India in search of education.

The African students in India, like the writer, found it unbelievable that because of their black skins they were not only despised, ignored and discriminated against, but were often subjected to ridicule, insult and assault by their Indian school-mates.

An Indian writer, Dom Moraes, whose book Gone Away, published in 1960, was based on his return visit to India after some years' absence in Europe, had the following to say [pp. 36 to 39] on his experience of the unpleasant and discriminatory practices of Indians towards students from Africa studying in Indian universities:

'At one of these colleges I was talking to some students after my lecture when a young African came rather shyly towards me. I had noticed him during the lecture, as he had been the only person in the audience sitting alone. I smiled at him, and he came up a little more quickly. The Indian students talking to me immediately turned their backs, and I found myself alone with the African, who said a little breathlessly, "I'm sorry to trouble you, but I have a few questions to ask you about life in England."

'So I asked him to tea the next day. He said, "Can I bring a few friends?" and I said, "Do," (in a privileged way) and then

he left. The other students immediately gathered round, assuming attitudes of rebuke.

'"You shouldn't demean yourself by talking to that hubshee." 'I was surprised. "What do you mean?"
'"We never speak to him," said a pretty girl. "You've let us down by doing it."
'"They are not like us," said a boy. "They are not civilized."
'"Don't be absurd," I said.
'They were all very hurt. "It's true. They are all savages in Africa. Some of them are still cannibals, whereas we have a long history of civilization."
'"And they look so horrid," said the pretty girl, pouting.
'"It is not colour prejudice," one of the boys said, "it is simply that we are a civilized nation and we do not want our country filled with black savages. They will corrupt our women."

'"Have you ever heard of Sir Oswald Mosley?" I asked. '"No. An Englishman? That is not the point. We are not objecting to Englishmen, but we do not like hubshees."
The next day I had tea with the African boy, Charles, and three of his friends. They were all from Uganda, and had been studying in India for periods of between four and six years. Two were doing law, and two, including Charles, medicine.
They were all very interested in England, in university life there, and particularly in the colour problem. I said that it sometimes happened that a hooligan minority stirred up incidents, but that the

Government had always taken strong measures to prevent these, and that the majority of British people had no real prejudice against colour.

'"How is it here?" I asked finally.
'The four looked ruefully at one another, and finally Charles said, "Not easy."
'"I guessed that," I said. "Why?"
Laughter. "Why do you think? It's not active, nobody ever attacks us physically, but nobody ever speaks to us either."
'"Don't you have Indian friends?"
They looked at one another again, checking over their experiences in subdued voices. Of the four, only one had an Indian friend.
"The other students, don't they ever ask you home?"
"When they do that they only do it once. And usually the reason for their asking us is that none of their family has ever seen an African."
'"Girls are more sympathetic than boys," Charles said (there was a chorus of sniggers and "You're telling us, old chap").
"No, shut up, old chap. They sometimes agree to come out with us or they ask us home, but then it becomes too difficult for them and everybody stares, sometimes school-children call out " Hubshee" and waiters are rude in restaurants, and their families object, and it gets impossible."
"I think it may be due to the caste system, or what's left of it," one of the law students said. "Caste, after all, began as a colour division. The proof is that even in the south, where the people are as dark as we are, there is prejudice."

'Charles said: "It is not just in Bombay, but all over India. All our boys have the same story."
'"But," said one of his friends, "Bombay is the worst place in the world."
"They all laughed quite good-humouredly.
'"I don't think it is anything to do with caste, though, old chap," Charles said. "I think it's just simple racial discrimination."
'I saw the boys several times after this. I noticed that whenever we were in the street people tended to stop and stare. One or two always shouted "Hubshee" and laughed, not behind their hands. The boys never took any notice, but walked with their heads up. I thought they were very brave.'

In Pakistan, where I spent three months, I found that the relationship between Pakistani and African students was more brotherly than that experienced in India.

2 *An Informal Chat with Nehru*

THOUGH ageing, at close range India's Prime Minister, seventy-three-year-old balding, snowy-haired Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, seems physically and mentally fit. With grey-ish brown skin, abstracted gaze, casual dress of brown or white achkan—a long coat— and the ever-present red rose securely pinned to its buttonhole, Nehru, for his age, presents an unusually vigorous and youthful personality.

Abroad, Nehru is not only highly esteemed and acclaimed as a man of reputable political experience, but he is considered a giant among Lilliputian statesmen. In the course of a vigorous political life he has seen many famous statesmen and politicians come and go—such men as Roosevelt, Stalin, Churchill, Eisenhower, Foster Dulles, U Nu and Menderes, to mention a few.

Once a political prisoner himself in the days of British rule, today his guidance and advice is eagerly sought both by the oppressed and the oppressor. Because India is a powerful non-aligned country, heads of state from the newly independent countries, as well as leaders of big nations, make their way to Nehru's doorstep to seek his blessing on everything from the birth of a new nation to the testing of a

hydrogen bomb capable of exterminating the whole of humanity.

Close up, what kind of a man is Pandit Nehru? This 'grand old man'—a name by which he is known to the 437,000,000 people of India who look up to him more as a father than another politician—has become an institution, and is regarded almost as an idol by his people. Nehru has long been regarded by the world as a leading statesman. Strange as it may seem, he is not held in this esteem by his own countrymen. Perhaps this is due to his policies of non-alignment and non- violence.

Early every morning teeming crowds of his people assemble on the green lawn outside his palatial residence, situated in the heart of the diplomatic quarters of New Delhi. While a few present petitions to him on his way to his office at the Foreign Ministry building, others appeal to him for favours. Graciously he stops to listen to everyone's complaint and in turn murmurs a few words of consolation. Most of them come just to feel his presence and receive darshan—a sort of communion with the country's 'father'. The throng, comforted and reassured, slowly disperses, feeling proud and relieved at the solemn words and gracious presence of Nehru.

Alone, the dominating presence of Nehru, though a man of fragile build, is keeping India progressively moving ahead, thereby making her a nation we cannot afford to brush aside with a wave of the hand. Nehru's long reign of power, his

unquestioned leadership, coupled with his absolute and often sympathetic personal rule, will immortalize him in the eyes of his people.
Probably the biggest blow to his ideological reputation based on the principle of non-alignment was the invasion of India by China. The shameful military actions of Red China towards India temporarily shattered the stand of positive neutralism to which India resolutely dedicated herself in the competitive struggle between the forces of communism and democracy.

India's catastrophic lack of preparation and her reluctance for an open showdown with Red China over the 'MacMahon Line' controversy stemmed directly from the policy of nonalignment, originated and named by Nehru. It is worth recalling what an Indian newspaper had to say during the height of border clashes between India and Red China: 'Nonalignment is no ideology. It is an idiosyncrasy.' This statement by one paper is contrary to the opinion held by most Indians, who seem to agree with Nehru's foreign policy.
My audience with Nehru took place three days after I arrived in New Delhi in December 1960, thus at a time when the strained relations between India and China were steadily worsening, and more or less heading for a collapse over the disputed territory. To see Mr. Nehru presented no difficulty. Refreshingly absent was the red tape I had experienced in meeting most of the other heads of state.
I had only to make my request to the Appointment Secretary, who by the way was also the Chief of Intelligence

and Security. It took less than five minutes for him to get through to Mr. Nehru by telephone and arrange the meeting for the following day. I was to report to the main entrance of Mr. Nehru's residence at 8 a.m ., where I would be met by his private secretary.

At the appointed time I arrived at the iron gate leading to his home. From the outside Mr. Nehru's flower-bedecked garden and white-painted residential building gave the impression of a deserted eighteenth- century castle, while from the main entrance I saw the huge and imposing red brick building of India's House of Parliament, with India's flag prominently flying on top.

A few minutes after my arrival a tall and neatly dressed gentleman approached me. 'From your colourful dress I can tell that you are Mr. Ajala from Nigeria. I am the Prime Minister's private secretary, and I believe you are here to see him.' I hastily agreed, and after a warm handshake he led me into the house. I was ushered into a spacious, airy and thickly carpeted room which was furnished in Victorian style. It was the reception room where Mr. Nehru usually meets his guests.
The oblong-shaped room has a strange but attractive atmosphere, quiet as a funeral parlour, with many photographs and unusual Indian objects, and an overpowering smell of burning Indian perfumes. Prominently displayed on the bookshelves, tables and glass cabinets are a number of personally signed photographs of world-famous statesmen, philosophers, authors and other

celebrities, including Churchill, Bertrand Russell, Nasser, Diefenbaker, Nkrumah, UNu, Mrs. Roosevelt and others. Hanging on one wall is the photograph of Queen Elizabeth, and, opposite, a neatly framed photo of a beautiful Indian lady clad in a sari, who was afterwards identified to me as Nehru's late wife.

My eyes were focussed on this photograph when Mr. Nehru solemnly emerged from a hidden staircase, followed by an aged Indian carrying a voluminous file of papers. Nehru was dressed in his usual long coat and super-tight Edwardian trousers which gripped him at the ankles. He had on a Gandhi- style white cap, and proudly displayed in the buttonhole of his jacket was a brightly coloured red rose. He looked calm, reserved and physically weak. He shyly shook my hand and waved me to a chair by his side.
'It is good to have you with us in India. I was told that you have been through a number of countries in the past few years. It must be very exciting,' he remarked. 'I wish I were in a position to travel like you. There is so much to see and know about people in other parts of the world.'

As I listened to this easily accessible and least ceremonious of statesmen, I noticed that part of his
white hair was protruding from under the firmly placed white cap, and also his face was wrinkled with age.

He wanted to know if this was my first visit to India and what I thought of the place in the short time of my stay.

'Yes, this is my first time here. It is such a vast and interesting country. There are many things to see and enjoy about Indian cultures, traditions and arts.'

He went on to say that there were a number of African students all over India and particularly in New Delhi.

'In fact I have met a few of them and I am very impressed by their literary knowledge and their manners. It is my hope to visit Africa in the next few months, particularly West Africa, where I have a lot of friends with whom I studied in England.'
'Your visit will make a good contribution to the courageous efforts of Africans. I feel sure that you will be very well received and welcomed in any of the African countries.'

I asked his comment on the border dispute and the incidents between India and communist China. He made a brief and reserved comment.

'It is unfortunate that India and China are having some trouble over territorial differences these days. We have always been friendly to each other until China decided to step on our toes. We are prepared to resist any attack and drive the Chinese out of our land. It will take some doing, I must admit.'

On the completion of this sentence, I noticed him change to a pensive mood. I was at a loss for words. I felt that nothing I could say after introducing China and Chou-Enlai into

our conversation could cheer or elate his stricken ego. I wasn't sure if I hadn't 'stepped on his toes' or touched a sore spot. However, as it happened I had no time to make any comment which could have relieved the situation. At this very moment his private secretary tiptoed into the room, signalling to me that my time with Nehru was over. He seemed not to notice the presence of the secretary because his eyes were focussed at the time on the red rose on his jacket, which he was nervously fingering.

'It is really very kind of you, sir, to receive me, knowing how very busy you are. If you don't mind, before I leave, I would like you to see the motor-scooter on which I am travelling around the world.'

He quickly got up from his chair, obviously back in his earlier good mood, and cheerfully exclaimed, 'I would very much like to sit on it myself, that is, if it will not take off on its own, with me on it.'

As we left the reception room and made our way towards the pathway on which his old-fashioned black Chrysler and my Lambretta were parked, I noticed a group of lady visitors in their late fifties, who were waiting to have a glimpse of Nehru. One of them rushed forward to introduce herself.

'I am the head of the University of Tennessee Home Economics Department. We have brought this cookery

book for you as a token to mark our visit to India.' I hadn't realized that Nehru was in the cookery business.

The others quickly whipped out their box and movie cameras and started going to work on Nehru. He looked rather perturbed.

After the tourists had gone he went over to my scooter and gingerly sat himself on it. As I was about to leave him, I could not help asking, 'Sir, you must be the tourist attraction No. 1 for India.'

He admitted in an embarrassed manner: 'I certainly don't mind tourists coming to India, but the idea of every one of them wanting to see me instead of the Taj Mahal disturbs me. I really don't know what to do about it.'

PART TWO

RUSSIA

3 *Visit to the Soviet Union*

HAVING been through a number of countries before going into the Soviet Union in 1957, I did not for one moment think that a black-skinned person could be asked, out of pure ignorance, whether in Africa black people drink black milk instead of white.
This was the enquiry innocently made of me by a bevy of peasants on a collective farm outside Minsk, where I had stopped for a night on my way from Berlin, through Warsaw, and on to Moscow by road. At the dinner-table I had sought a glass of milk to wash down the heavy meal of roast chicken, mashed potatoes and a mountain of sliced black bread.

After I had cautiously corrected them of their ignorance they timidly apologized and pointed out that I was not to take their question as an insult. 'In fact,' said the cadre of the collective farm, 'most of these people, including myself, have never seen a black man before you came along tonight. You must have noticed our children screaming and the women running away when you came. Please forgive us.'

Ruefully I smiled and offered to sing for them a few African songs, accompanied by a tiny drum, which they provided.

They must have enjoyed it all, because the 'festivity in honour of the first black man in town' went on all night. It was to my great regret that at sunrise I had to leave in order to continue my journey by scooter to Moscow.

Of all nations on earth, none is more fascinating, politically intriguing or creates so much curiosity in most people of the world as the Soviet Union. The 210,000,000 people inhabiting the vast territory of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, spread over more than one-seventh of the earth's surface, have, since the Revolution, been looked upon as unpredictable, and as living in a world of bondage and misery.

On two occasions during five years of world travel I visited Russia. The first time was in 1957, a few days after I had received from Nikita Khrushchev, personally, a visa which allowed me to travel on my motor-scooter from communist Berlin, through Warsaw and on the Soviet highway via Minsk to Moscow.

During the ten days I spent in Russia in September 1957 I saw very little that was memorable, except for the lounge and four corners of my delicately furnished room at the giant Hotel Ukraine, located in the heart of the foreign diplomatic residential quarters of Moscow. I was shadowed day and night, and even my movements in the hotel were constantly watched. It would be safe to say that I was more or less on a conducted tour, and this I knew from the very day I hit the Polish-Russian frontier. At the border, after

completing all the necessary formalities, I was detailed to proceed with two motor-cyclist military escorts to Moscow—a distance of about 1,500 miles. We made the hectic journey in less than three days.

On arrival in Moscow, after I had been deposited at the hotel, I was forbidden to wander about the city on my own. I was forewarned not to stop and talk to anyone in the streets. I was relieved of my two cameras, which were returned to me in good condition, minus the films, on the day of my departure. At this time I and my motor-scooter were being bundled by Russian security police into an international express train heading for Prague, after ten uneventful days.

My second journey to the Soviet Union in July 1962 was loaded with excitement; from the open discrimination I experienced at the hands of taxi drivers to the sudden arrest of a beautiful red-headed Russian girl friend for having visited me at my hotel.

For the second journey to the Soviet Union I travelled direct from Djarkata, in Indonesia, by the Russian commercial aircraft Aeroflot. I was not only able to take a number of pictures without being harassed, but on my own I mixed with everyday people, including Afro-Asian students, many of whom are married to Russian girls. In this way I gained much informative knowledge — the knowledge I had desperately but unsuccessfully sought during my first visit.

My major difficulty, which, regrettably enough, I was unable to overcome, I met when I tried to visit a Russian family in their home. I tried desperately to achieve this, and even went to the extent of suggesting it to a number of close Russian friends I made, but without success. I soon discovered that they are very sensitive and touchy about such a subject, especially when mentioned by a visiting foreigner, whether he be from Hungary, Africa or the North Pole.

There were two reasons for my second visit to the Soviet Union in the latter part of 1962.

Between the first brief conducted tour I made in 1957 and the informative visit I made in 1962, I had often read and heard about the bitter experiences of Afro-Asian students who were studying in various Russian colleges and universities.

In particular, foreign students from the African states studying in colleges all over the country were said to be the target for constant physical attack and racial discrimination at the hands of hooligans and teddy boys. In addition, they were reported to be regularly subjected to communist indoctrination in various forms, applied to them to counteract African nationalism.

Such physical assaults and gang-like beatings of some of the African students by Russians were reported to occur frequently in public parks, at the cinema and similar places,

whenever one of the boys was on 'dates' with his Russian girl friend.
How true were these accusations against the government of a country which has always professed to stand resolutely against colonialism and apartheid in Africa? This was the question I asked the African students I met on the campus of Moscow's Friendship University, and when I went along to see others at their residential quarters near the university.

What was also of interest to me was to make a comparison between the living conditions and social set-up of the average Russian family in today's Russia and those of Stalin's era— an era when the communist regime was stated to be more ruthless and oppressive.

By the end of the third week, as I was getting ready to leave Moscow for New Delhi, I was convinced that I had found the answer to my questions.

In public restaurants, department stores, parks and on the streets I had experienced no hostile or uncooperative attitude when I offered to take photographs or struck up a conversation with Russian folk.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, however, I did find one thing common to every Russian friend I made. Whenever I suggested that I would like to visit their home in order to meet their family I was looked at scornfully and bluntly refused such an invitation. As one Intourist guide,

Natasha, whom I came to know fairly well, put it:

'In our country we do not consider any foreigner to be a good enough friend to invite into our home. It is our tradition in Russia.' This remark she finally made after she had been my constant companion for more than ten days. Every day I had pressed her for an invitation. I did in fact obtain her promise to invite me to her home before the final day of my departure from Moscow, but at the last minute she backed down and made the above statement, which I suspect she had rehearsed.

II
Second Journey to Moscow

The direct journey from Djakarta to Moscow by Aeroflot's four-engined Ilyushin took twenty-three hours. Three stops were made for refuelling, at Rangoon, New Delhi and Tashkent.

Unlike most of the Western commercial airlines by which I had flown, this Russian airline showed an unusual disregard for commercial aircraft safety rules as far as the maximum care of passengers was concerned. The safe landing of both the aircraft and passengers appears to be of little or no interest to the crew of a Russian plane, and this includes the hostesses and even the pilot, who is supposed to see that

everything is in order before the flight.

On boarding the aircraft in Djakarta, in company with about fifty-nine other passengers, mostly Indonesians, I noticed that before the plane taxied from the tarmac we were not warned to 'fasten your seat- belts'. Also, there were no signs or directions in the giant aircraft. You were informed only by the loud slamming of the doors that the aircraft was ready to take off.

Once we were in the air and the plane was winging its way over the Pacific towards Rangoon, I expected to be told to 'unfasten your seat-belt'. I was wrong. That decision was left to my own judgment.

In the case of an accident I'm afraid that only the English speaking Russian hostesses could have used the 'emergency landing kit'. Its doubtlessly fascinating mechanism was left to our imagination—not a word was breathed to us about its location or use.

Every minute of the twenty-three hours I spent in the insufficiently pressurized and frightfully noisy aircraft was filled with the fear of a sudden and fatal disaster. What kept me going and relieved the tension which gripped me as I wondered about it was the company of an Australian seated next to me. Tall, lanky and bespectacled William Morrow was full of humour and more of a comedian than 'a dedicated communist', which he labelled himself by way of introduction.

'We have two crackpots in the Australian Government: Menzies and Barwick. Both of them like people to think that they are politicians. They are nothing but empty-headed lawyers-turned-Ministers.' He managed to down a shot of Russian vodka between each sentence.

'You know, my friend, I was an M.P. for many years, but old Menzies and his gang got jealous of me and had me thrown out of Parliament. I am a staunch communist, and by being a communist I have seen every part of the world while attending conferences. You name a place and I tell you I have been there— China, Oslo, Japan. I have been in Russia three times. I must not forget to tell you that I have received both the Lenin and Stalin peace prizes.'

I had no chance whatsoever of saying anything when he started talking.

'What do you think of Indonesian politics?' I enquired.

'Wonderful people, these Indonesians. I like Soekarno a lot, but not General Nasution. Nasution is always giving hell to the Indonesian communists. I have been in Indonesia many times on my way to Europe and China. If it were not for the communists, Indonesia would still be under Dutch colonial rule, which was worse than British, German and French colonialism put together.'

At this time we were halfway between Rangoon and Delhi. Morrow hailed one of the hostesses: 'Another bottle of

vodka, miss, and give my friend a clean glass. I am going to get him to drink with me.'

He turned his wrinkled face towards me, fixing me with a ferocious stare.

'Where was I? Oh yes, I remember. Take the economy of the country today, which is at a standstill. You know who is to blame for that? Not the Indonesians, but the Australian and American tourists with their dollars. They come to Indonesia and start changing their dollars at black-market rates which are about twenty times more than the official rate they can get at the bank. If I was Soekarno I would send both these tourists and the Indonesians engaged in black marketing to the gallows. They all deserve death sentences.' He paused briefly.

'America, Australia and Britain want to see Soekarno come begging them for financial aid. But Soekarno is very clever, he knows all this. So he turns to Russia.

Balding William Morrow was one of about twelve Australians who boarded the plane at Djakarta. They were on their way to attend Moscow's World Congress for Peace and Disarmament. Morrow wanted me to know his opinion on Indonesia's struggle for the recovery of West New Guinea.

'I believe the Dutch deserved to be thrown out of New Guinea, and, if you ask me, I think that Australian East

New Guinea should also be thrown to the wolves. It's costing us a fortune to keep the jungle going.'

A few hours after we had taken off from New Delhi, at about 1 a.m. the following day, my new-found friend dozed off to sleep.

The plane was now flying at a lower altitude over the monstrous sharp Himalaya Mountains. The beauty of full moon saturated the snow-covered mountains which spread, crocodile-shaped, over hundreds of miles from India, edging Nepal and across to Afghanistan and part of Soviet Russia.

It was nearing daybreak. Much as I wanted to sleep, I had not the courage even to doze. I kept thinking of the rough edges and terror of the Himalaya Mountains directly below us and the emergency- landing kit which was still nowhere to be seen.

'Would you like some sleeping pills?' a voice from the darkness quietly enquired. It was one of the two beautiful Russian hostesses.

'No, thank you, I am all right,' I hastily assured her.

In their favour it must be said that the hostesses saw to it that every passenger was made comfortable and given good attention and service as well as food in abundance.

On crossing into the huge territory of the Soviet Union, an aerial survey of the aerodromes of both Tashkent and Moscow gave the impression of aircraft factories. Assembled at each of the airports were many white-painted commercial aircraft. They were of many sizes and shapes, from helicopters to turbo-jets, single- to four-engined planes. I also noticed that most of them were giant Ilyushins and turbo-jets Topolov TU.104. The fascinating and impressive appearance of the aircraft parked on the large area of the airport presented a beautiful and colourful scene.

Encircling Moscow Airport itself was a jungle of thick forest bordered by small farms and villages.

I could see a few foreign airliners to Moscow Airport as soon as our plane touched down. They included Britain's B.E.A ., Holland's K.L.M ., Air-India and Air France. I noticed also the conspicuous presence of a group of American doctors. They had chartered a Pan-American aircraft from New York to Moscow to attend an international cancer conference.

An unexpected and terrifying incident took place soon after our plane finally touched down. Before I could disembark and breathe the fresh air of Moscow, two Russians, with pistols dangling at the waist, boarded the plane and made for where I was seated. They turned out to be members of the Secret Police.

As a journalist on current political affairs I had often indulged, when occasion arose, in criticism of both the Soviet Union and the United States. When accosted by the two grim-faced men I was afraid that I might have been lured into the Soviet Union. This could have been the start of retribution for my past criticism of Russia. The two heavily built men, enveloped in dark-coloured raincoats, walked hurriedly towards me. Both sported grey felt hats. Pensive and unsmiling, they came closer to where I was seated, while I tried to untangle myself from a pile of heavy baggage and from my seat-belt.

The taller of the two men asked, 'Are you Mr. Olabisi Ajala, the journalist from Nigeria?' I glumly answered in the affirmative. The eyes of the other passengers were focussed in curiosity on the men and myself. They appeared morbidly interested in my predicament.

The second man wasted no time in adding, 'You must collect your belongings and come with us in our car.'

I was instantly panic-stricken and nervously asked: 'What is this all about? I am here in Moscow only as a tourist.' No. reply. 'If I am not wanted here I am prepared to catch the next plane out.' Again no friendly reaction, just the same gloomy faces.

'We have nothing to tell you now except that you must come with us.'

I had no choice and I wanted no part of any violence, so I agreed to their request.

The weather in Moscow, as we disembarked from the plane, was misty and damp and unbearably cold. I was shivering violently as I walked along with my captors (or are they friends?) across the tarmac to the main exit gate. We emerged into the main street of the airport and headed for the spot where their car was parked. I noticed them whispering in Russian. Soon I was again flanked on either side.

'You must now give us your travel documents for safekeeping, including your passport.'

I immediately became suspicious and resisted their demand.

'I am sorry, gentlemen, I must say that I am not allowed to part with my passport. I am quite capable of looking after it myself.'

'We insist that you give it to us now. Your refusal or any stubbornness may create some trouble for you.'

I quickly replied: 'Gentlemen, in that case I demand that you let me get in touch with the British Embassy. I would prefer to hand over the passport there rather than to you, as it was issued to me by the Queen of England.'

They eyed each other and looked terribly offended and disgusted with me.

'Very well, you will keep your passport for now. Please get into the car.' It was an order. My belongings were placed in the boot of the limousine and I was ushered into the back seat. I sat between the two men. I was still not told our destination.

As we drove away from the airport, I had a feeling of deep insecurity and nervousness. Outwardly I tried to hide my frantic feelings. I endeavoured to appear confident and unperturbed and occasionally flashed them smiles, which appeared to serve no useful purpose. There was no exchange of jokes or conversation throughout the trip. I could easily have thought we were on our way to a funeral. We would have made three perfect mourners.

'Is Moscow usually as cold as this at this time of the year?' I hopefully volunteered. No answer. The man behind the wheel, moustached and sombre, was as silent as his passengers. I was becoming more and more restless, and fear was rapidly building up in me.

After about fifteen minutes of fast driving from the airport, the car came to a screeching halt at a wide intersection. A prominent sign on the left side of the intersection read 'MOCKBA'. Our car branched into this highway. Here I suspected that we must be making for Moscow. Just where

in Moscow I still didn't know.

The near surroundings of the highway all the way from the airport to Moscow filled my eyes with both squalor and beauty. While the road itself was unusually wide, even wider than the German autobahn, small farms and houses with rusty tin roofs were to be seen on either side in a neglected state. They appeared uncared-for.

About five miles or so before hitting the outskirts of Moscow I saw new gigantic apartment houses and industrial factories. They were a relief after the slum-like, derelict houses and uncultivated farms.

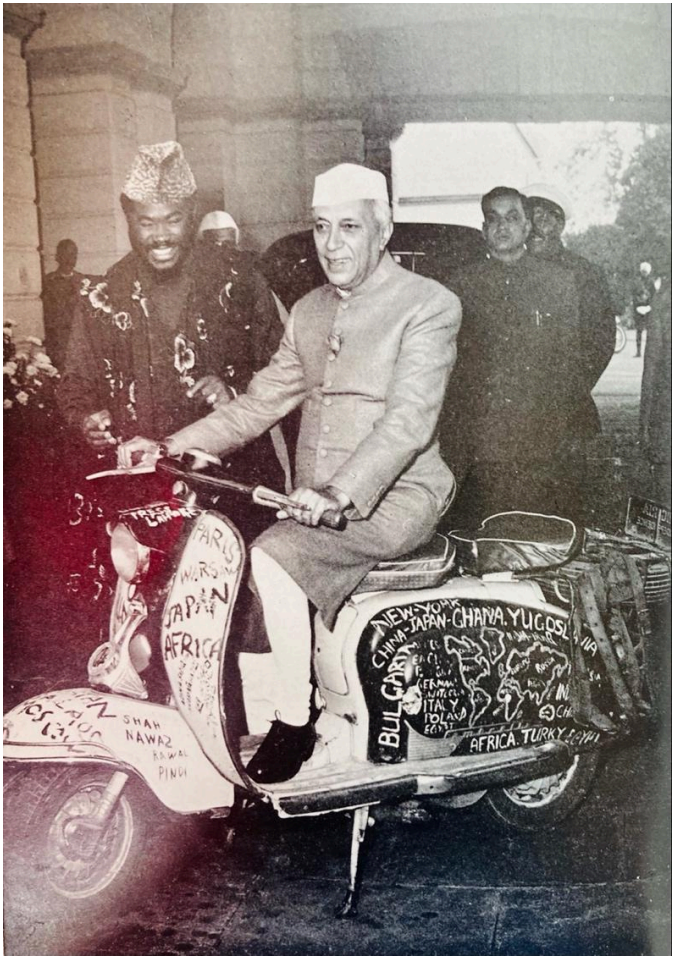
As we entered Moscow proper, before crossing over the impressive Lenin Bridge, I sighted the famous Moscow Park of Culture, situated by the foot of the bridge. On top of the wide entrance, supported by grey stone pillars, was a blown-up portrait of Lenin. The photograph, prominently perched on top of the pillars, dominates the whole colourful atmosphere of the renowned park.

We proceeded towards the bridge and found ourselves coming closer to the heart of Moscow—Red Square. Through the window of the car I could see ahead of us the golden dome of St. Basil's Church, which is now a museum, and the Kremlin walls.

Now we were over the Lenin Bridge.
The wide streets of Moscow looked rather like the airport

tarmacs we had just left. They give the impression of being built more for pedestrians than for cars. Everywhere I noticed people dressed in heavy winter clothes. They walked along sluggishly, right in front of passing cars. There was little attention paid to traffic rules, despite the rapid speed of the cars. Blue- uniformed and white-helmeted traffic policemen were to be seen everywhere. Even so, street-signs and traffic- lights were ignored. The driver of our car almost ran over an old lady who was balancing a heavy parcel on her head. She was strolling along in ease and comfort in front of our car. Our driver, in a panic, suddenly jammed his foot on the brake. We almost hurtled into the front seat. The driver sighed heavily in relief, then fished a cigarette from his pocket, lit it and restarted the car.

Olabisi Ajala



Meeting with Nehru

'Moscow is not the place for me,' I muttered to myself. 'In New York I could walk against a red traffic- light and get away with it or get only a police ticket for jay-walking. In a place like Moscow I would probably end up in a hospital with a broken leg, if not in the morgue.'

'Just how much farther are we going, you guys? Where are you taking me?' No reply again.

Steadily trying to puzzle out the riddle of their unfriendly looks, I could not help thinking that I might be going before the Russian Chief of Police Intelligence or perhaps to Moscow's notoriously famous Central City Jail where a cell might have been reserved for me.

The driver diverted his car away from the central part of the city and made several short cuts through side lanes. We drove under a bridge bypass, which brought us to a small park with well-trimmed grass and colourful flowers. On the laneway in front of a giant skyscraper, whose exterior resembled London's Houses of Parliament, we made another screeching halt. From my previous visit to Moscow I recognized the place as the Hotel Ukraine, one of many such skyscrapers 'built by Joseph Stalin in order to match Western capitalist skyscrapers'. This I was later told by a Russian lady, Helena Vatovich.

Immediately after we had got out of the car and retrieved my belongings from the boot, the heavily set policeman quietly informed me in a refined voice: 'Mr. Ajala, we have

arranged a room for you at this hotel for the duration of your visit to Moscow. It is the best of all the beautiful hotels in Moscow. My friend Nikolai and I will be at your complete disposal at any time of the day or night.'

'You may like to give me your telephone number or tell me the department where I can contact you,' I managed to say.

He was quick to reply: 'Never mind about you contacting us. Tomorrow we shall give you a young lady who will be guiding you around Moscow; that is, if you so desire. Her name is Natasha.'

I was struck dumb with surprise and groped for suitable words to express appreciation. Their sudden change of attitude and their hospitable gestures left me cold after their previous treatment.

I tried without success to extract from them a logical reason for their earlier attitude, which had created in me so much suspense and fear. I could not resist a parting shot: 'I must thank you good people for all your trouble. I certainly enjoyed your company all the way from the airport. We must do this again sometime.' They did not get the joke.

I was helped with my luggage into the lobby of the hotel, where I was booked into a room.

As we were about to part company, a thought came to me: 'This lady coming to fetch me tomorrow— Natasha, I

believe you said—is she married or single? I say this because I would like to know the proper way to address her. It's an African custom, you know.'

They sheepishly glanced at each other. 'What is this African custom?' asked one of them, smiling.

By this time I was getting a kick out of pulling their legs.

'You know. To either address her as Miss or Mrs.'

The taller one now flashed his gold-fitted teeth, his once grim face full of laughter.

'You must be the Charlie Chaplin of Africa. All right, Natasha is not married and she is only twenty-one years old and a rather pretty girl. She speaks very good English, which she studies at the Institute of Foreign Languages in Moscow. Please make no African ju-ju tricks on Natasha.'

'African ju-ju tricks? What in the hell does he mean,' I mused to myself.

III

The following morning, about 8 a.m ., Natasha showed up. She banged repeatedly on my door. I thought for a moment that she was going to break it down. Red-headed Natasha Korneva, who was to be my constant companion, turned out a plump, attractive and unusually inquisitive lady. She

was wearing a brown, unfashionable suit which seemed several sizes too large for her. Her very high, thick-heeled shoes looked terribly outdated.

Socially and politically, Natasha and I differed. She certainly was not going for any 'African ju-ju tricks'. She was an avid lover of modern jazz and

American pop-songs. 'I am in love with Peggy Lee and also Harry Belafonte. I sing always Peggy Lee and Belafonte on Voice of America and Jazz U.S.A ., ' she boisterously said.

'You sure speak very good English, Natasha,' I praised, with reservation.

'Yes, I learn English by B.B.C. every night and learn singing by Voice of America. I am the pop-singer only in Moscow.'

I was fascinated by Natasha's appreciation and love for Western commercial songs. It was astonishing to discover that she knew much more than I did about the private lives of such celebrities as Frank Sinatra, Connie Francis, Tommy Steele, Sammy Davis Jnr ., Shirley Bassey and Elvis Presley. She went on to mention the names of many others, some of whom I had not even heard about myself.

'Sinatra no love Russian girls. He cissy only with Ava Gardner.'

I was aghast. 'What is this about "he cissy?" ' I enquired.

'I mean Sinatra make love only to Ava Gardner, no love Russian women,' she explained. Certainly this was the newest expression for 'love' I had heard.

Despite my lukewarm interest in her craze for Western commercial pop-songs, Natasha persisted, very much against my will, in singing a Peggy Lee song. 'I will sing for you "Love Me or Leave Me" in the same voice and style of Peggy Lee. You listen and look to my face,' she purposefully instructed.

'All right, dear, take it away, Peggy Lee of Russia,' I encouraged.

She made a short rasping noise with her throat in preparation for her singing debut.

I had to listen. I was glad when finally she finished. I clapped my hands in great relief. Hearing her and looking at the expression on her face, as she sang with obvious strain and pain, terrified me. For a moment I thought she was going to have a fit. All this time we were seated on a public bench in a small park, directly opposite the hotel. It was getting dark and Natasha certainly succeeded in making us the laughingstock of passers-by.

Before we parted company, the same evening, Natasha warned me that Premier Nikita Khrushchev was due to make a speech at Moscow's World Congress for Peace and Disarmament the following day. I was to go along with her,

at the invitation of the organizers, to the Hall of Congress in the Kremlin where the seven- day conference was being held. I agreed.

Moscow's Hall of Congress, where top Presidium executives and international communist groups usually meet, is a tall, square-shaped building. It is brand-new and very imposing. It has its location in the heart of the Kremlin, amid historic buildings constructed in the days of the Czars. Inside it is floodlit and provides seating accommodation for over 2,500 people. The furnishings are lavish and in excellent taste.

As Natasha and I entered the building, we noticed that it was crowded to capacity. There were more than 2,300 delegates representing over ninety-six countries, most of them in flowing colourful national dress. They came from Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America. The three largest delegations were from India, the United States and Argentina—more than 150 each. There were delegates from Nigeria, led by a lady—Mrs. Ransome-Kuti—from Ghana, Ceylon, Britain, Indonesia, Japan, Morocco, Mexico, Kenya, South Africa and Austria, to mention a few.

The blue-clad Russian guards who accosted us soon after we entered the conference hall asked to see our invitation cards. Natasha flashed ours from her bag. We were seen to the two seats reserved for us.

It was now 9.45 a.m. Premier Khrushchev was eagerly expected at 10 a.m. There was no warning that he might be

coming later than expected. At the stroke of ten a mumbling commotion arose at the main entrance of the hall. Most of the seated delegates gazed back over their shoulders towards the door. The hall was spontaneously rent by shouts of ovation and loud clapping. This went on for about seven solid minutes. Nikita Khrushchev was nowhere to be seen by any of the clapping audience. The rostrum from where he was expected to deliver his address was heavily bedecked with roses and other flowers of all colours. The clapping slowly died down when Khrushchev did not appear.

It was nearing midday and Khrushchev was still nowhere to be seen. There was still no statement from the Kremlin Palace, a few yards away, as to what was keeping Khrushchev behind. The chairman on this occasion was a noted French physicist and philosopher. He adjourned the meeting for fifteen minutes.

At 12.20 an announcement over the loudspeakers installed in the hallways, restaurants, lounges and toilets warned: 'Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev, our main guest speaker for today, is due to arrive in the hall any minute now. All members are hereby advised to return to their seats immediately.'

There was a hasty rush of people trying to find their way back to their seats. By 12.30 everybody was seated, their faces studiously glued to the platform where Khrushchev was due to speak. At 12.50 Nikita Khrushchev was still

nowhere to be seen. The place was in a complete state of suspense. I saw a number of people biting their nails; the chairman, now looking embarrassed, swallowed successive glasses of water. As all eyes of the audience were directed towards him, he put on a pair of dark glasses.

At exactly 1 p.m ., the chairman, speaking timidly and hardly audibly, announced over the microphone: 'While we are waiting for our honoured guest to arrive I would like to call on Dr. Subandrio, the head of the Indonesian delegation, to deliver the message of President Soekarno to this august conference.' This announcement was immediately accompanied by a great ovation.

Dr. Subandrio turned out to be not the Foreign Minister of Indonesia, whom everyone had thought the chairman had meant. It was his beautiful and fragile- looking wife, who, like her husband, was once a practising physician.

All the same, it was a relief for everyone present to have the monotonous silence broken.

Mrs. Subandrio, gaily dressed in an Indonesian sarong, walked with ease from her seat among the audience, amidst the deafening noise of applause, to the rostrum. She spoke for about fifteen minutes. Mrs. Subandrio's speech, in comparison with those of the United States, India, Kenya and Argentina, was forceful, exceptionally nationalistic and oratorial.

'It is goodwill and understanding towards other's grievances which are a prelude to the cementing together of bonds of friendship. In this concept the exploitation of sections of humanity by others cannot be tolerated any longer. The degradation and oppression by colonialists and imperialists, the exploitation of sections of humanity by other sections of humanity, has to be wiped-out in order to settle disarmament and bring peace to our troubled world.' She stopped for a gulp of water placed in front of her in a glass.

"This remarkable gathering here in Moscow, consisting of people from all walks of life, race and religion and from all parts of the world, demonstrates, without doubt, that the vast majority of people all over the world are yearning for peace. This is a united platform holding different political views. It marks the first such representative body outside the United Nations.'

She was wildly applauded by all, beyond anything I had seen and heard for many years.

The leader of the Kenya delegation was next in line to be called upon to address the gathering. I glanced at my watch. It was 2.55 p.m.

A conspicuously bearded Indian Sikh, neatly turbaned, hurried from the side entrance of the stage to the chairman. He exchanged a few whispered words with the chairman and then quickly vanished behind the door. The chairman, a smile on his wrinkled face, clutched the microphone and

drew it closer: 'Ladies and gentlemen, the Kenya speaker will have to speak later.' He paused and had a brief exchange of words with a lady seated next to him. He continued now more loudly:

'I have just been told that our honoured guest, Prime Minister Khrushchev, is now here and is ready to address us.'

Again he made a prolonged pause in order to give him and the rest of the delegates enough time to stand up out of respect for Khrushchev.

'Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the Prime Minister of the

Soviet Union, Mr. Nikita Khrushchev.'

Khrushchev was heralded on to the stage by the sound of overwhelming applause.

He had on a loose-fitting, fawn-coloured suit and walked rapidly across to the speakers' rostrum where a standing microphone had been placed for him. He was unsmiling. Following closely at his heels was a Russian carefully carrying a jug of water and a drinking glass.

Khrushchev reached into his coat pocket for his silver-rimmed reading glasses. Gently he placed them on his face. Rather timidly, he bowed to the applause of the excited audience. He graciously beckoned with his hands for

everyone to take their seats. From his left pocket he retrieved a pile of loose papers on which was written, in long hand, the text of his speech.

Admittedly, Khrushchev was an arresting orator, but after about half an hour of his speech his listeners were getting bored. Soon I noticed a number of grey-uniformed Russian usherettes nudging people awake—mostly Africans and Indians. Natasha had to say her piece to me in support of the usherettes: 'It is bad manners for these people to sleep when our Prime Minister is speaking.'

I knew that some of them had gone to sleep not because Khrushchev was speaking in Russian. The translations of the speech were being instantly relayed over the earphones, in French, English, Spanish, Hindi and Chinese. His sermon was simply boring and unduly prolonged. He spoke for a good three hours, reading mainly from his text.

What caught the majority of his listeners by surprise was that throughout his marathon speech, Khrushchev made no warlike threats or challenge to America or any other Western power. He delivered the speech calmly and with a convincing and impressive purpose in mind.

To my mind, as much as Khrushchev's speech was meant to make a good impact on the audience and to display to the world that 'the Russians want peaceful co-existence with all countries of the world', the speech turned out to be futile and disastrous. This became more so, because a few days

after the 'Peace Congress' ended Russia exploded a fifty-megaton bomb. This double-faced action by Russia indisputably wrecked the aim and effort of both the organizers of the conference and the delegates who had travelled to the Soviet Union for the 'Peace and Disarmament Congress'. It appeared as a deliberate and calculated affront to the prestige of the governments of the non-aligned nations who had counted on Khrushchev to play ball and live up to his words and promises.

IV

Thursday the 12th of July marked the third day of my arrival in Moscow. The previous day I had listened to the marathon speech of Nikita Khrushchev at the Kremlin's Hall of Congress.

Natasha and I had agreed to meet and have breakfast together the following day.

Sharp on eight, she walked into the restaurant with her handbag slung over her shoulder. She grabbed a chair and sat herself dejectedly opposite me. The expression on her babyish face was calm, lifeless and terribly dull.

'Good morning to you, Natasha. I hope you got home O.K. last night,' I remarked.

'Good morning, Mr. Ajala,' was all she had to say.

'You look fed-up. Is anything wrong with you today?'

She was fumbling with the contents of her over- weighted handbag placed on her lap. She dug out a pink-coloured lipstick which she dabbed crudely over her wet lips.

'I have trouble with my boy friend. He no good boy. He take dancing my girl friend last night when I went to his house. Now I finish with him.'

I regretted having asked her. She was unhappy and very upset over it. I found myself feeling sorry for her. I suspected there was no use in my trying to console her.

'Well, Natasha, do not worry about it. Like all women, men are good at the game of double-crossing. I am sure he will come to apologize and plead with you.'

It did not take much time for Natasha to recover from her pride being hurt. When we had finished breakfast and I had collected my camera equipment she volunteered to take me on a sightseeing tour of Moscow. We hopped into a taxi. Instead of going to the places of interest in Moscow, Natasha took me to the outskirts of the city where Moscow University was situated. We spent the whole of the morning on the lawn of the university talking about international politics and communism. She seemed very well informed on a variety of current political affairs. 'The other day was pop-songs, today it is politics and communism,' I said in a

joking manner. She did not like this.

'Do not make jokes. I am doing only my job with you. I will ask questions and you will answer me. Tomorrow maybe we see Moscow,' she confidently commanded.

We strolled about for a while on the campus, stopping occasionally to peep into classrooms. The students at the towering university were on holiday. At the end of the tour of inspection Natasha suddenly grabbed me by the left hand and led me in the direction of a bench near a round-shaped fountain.

'I take it that I will be within my right to refuse to answer or comment on any question you may ask me?'

She made no reply, but eyed me suspiciously. She got out of her bag a filtered cigarette and balanced it in one corner of her red-painted lips. I offered to light it for her. The setting for the interrogation now seemed perfectly in order. She dug out from her bag a folded sheet of paper on which was scribbled something in Russian. She glanced at the paper from time to time as she spoke to me.

'Now, Mr. Ajala, correct me if I am wrong.' She began: 'You were born in Ghana. When you were six months old your father and mother, who were traders in Ghana at the time, returned to Nigeria, taking you with them. You went to the Baptist Mission School in Lagos and Ibadan Boys' High School in Nigeria until you were seventeen years old. In

1948 you went to America to continue your studies against the wish of your father. Am I right so far, Mr. Ajala?' she momentarily stopped to ask.

I was flabbergasted by all this.

'You are correct about everything so far, but how in the hell do you come to know all this? Are you some kind of fortune-teller?' I demanded.

'Now I must continue and I like you listen and agree to me. In America you go school to Augustana College in Rock Island, Roosevelt University in Chicago and finally to Columbia University in New York. Most time in America you studied psychology, not journalism. After many years in America you go spend two years in Canada, and after stayed another two years in London. In 1957 from London you start world travels with motor-scooter. This your second time you visit my country. February 1958 you make three months' visit your father and mother in Africa and going travel again in the world.' She briefly paused and then added, 'You must be son of capitalist man in Nigeria for travel so much.' She concluded with a dash of smile on her rubber-face.

I could not pretend that I was not curious to know how she came to be in possession of the information. Everything she said was accurate. I braced myself properly and resolved not to show any anxiety. I knew that no matter how I pressed

her she would not divulge the source of her information.

'O.K ., Natasha, you win about everything. Now tell me what has all this got to do with you and my visit to your country?'

'Nothing, just to let you know that we Russians are friends to Africa,' she replied.

Somehow, something didn't seem to add up as she made this statement. I was very much dissatisfied but I wasn't going to say any more.

'Tell me, my friend, what political party you belong in America, Nigeria and England,' she wanted to know.

'Listen, sweetheart, I am just a struggling writer. I have no politics anywhere.'

'But that is very strange, Mr. Ajala, everybody must belong to a party. I think every African must join communist party. It is the only answer against colonialism and imperialism,' she intoned.

I was quick to interrupt: 'I hardly believe that you are correct about that. From what I have seen with my eyes of communism in both Eastern Europe and Asia I am convinced that it is not the answer to African salvation—and, if I may add, neither is the American brand of democracy.'

Red-faced and obviously looking annoyed with me, she was getting ready to speak when I quickly summed up.

'Mind you, I am not criticizing either American democracy or Russian communism. Both are just as good as they are evil where I am concerned.'

'I ask to you please another question. What newspaper you read always when in London and New York? Always you read *Daily Worker*?'

I wasn't sure what these probing questions were leading to: 'Usually I read the *New York Times*. London's *Observer* and *Daily Express*. Sometimes I read the *Daily Worker*. *Pravda* I can't read, because it is not legible enough for me.'

'But in America and Britain the *Daily Worker* best paper to read,' she represented.

'That, my good Natasha, is a matter of choice for everyone. You may be correct,' I cheerfully pointed out.

Young Natasha Korneva, sporting a horsetail hair-do, was a remarkably intelligent, cleverly witty and brusque lady. She lacked any sense of humour. Then and there I decided that I had seen and stomached enough of her inquisitiveness. I wanted the last chapter of our association to be brought to an end.

'Natasha, I was told on my arrival in Moscow that it was not compulsory for me to have an official guide if I didn't want one.' She nodded her head in compliance with my remark. "Therefore, I have decided I do not need one any longer. That relieves you of your job with me.'

'Well, I will speak Intourist and this afternoon I tell you after lunch what speak office,' she advised.
I felt that indulging in hanging around with

Natasha or any official guide would definitely dampen my chances of getting to mix freely and finding out what I wanted to know about the social and living conditions among the average Russian people. I was still to look into the 'racial plights' of the foreign students from Africa and Asia.

In fulfilment of her promise, after lunch Natasha was seated waiting for me in the main reception room of my hotel on the ground floor reading a copy of *Pravda*.

When she saw me standing towering over her she glanced up at me.
'Yes, Mr. Ajala, I am sorry I see you not in time.

I report my boss you no like any more guide. He speak I tell you it is all right. But I come to wait you here every day. When you like any help I must give to you.'

I shook her firmly by the hand and expressed my gratitude for her past cooperation. 'I am sure I will not need you any more, or any guide, for the rest of my stay in Moscow. Thank you again for everything, Natasha. You have been sweet to me.' We parted company. At least, I thought that was the last I would see of Natasha.

That day I spent the rest of the afternoon indoors.

V

'Listen, my African friend. Alive, Stalin was a

menace to our society. Today in Russia, though dead and gone for good, Stalin's name and image have a certain fascination for every Russian except Khrushchev. And do you know why?'

The once-German Nazi, who was captured in Leningrad during the Second World War and was now a naturalized Russian citizen, stopped abruptly and glanced apprehensively over his shoulder. In a secretive whisper, after moving his mouth closer to my left ear, he added:

'Khrushchev is a traitor and a drunken hypocrite. We all know that in Russia, but what can we do? I certainly don't want to be sent back to the salt-mines in Siberia. I spent twelve years there before I became a Russian citizen. They would not allow me to go back to Germany after the war.

Anyway, I am happy here. I am a mining engineer, you know.'

Thus nervously confided the gentle-mannered ex-Nazi whom I had first met inside a camera shop on Moscow's Pushkinskaya Square.

The morning I met this man, who at his own insistence I will now identify anonymously as 'Gunther', I set out from my hotel alone, after having discarded the services of the government official 'guides'. I was determined to paint the town red and mix with the ordinary people strictly on my own. I made up my mind to hit a few spots of human interest in Moscow, despite the fact that my adventure might land me in trouble with N.K.V.D. Intelligence.

Nonchalantly I wandered into the first camera shop I saw on the main shopping street. It was packed with men and women of all ages, but most of them were fresh-faced youths. I could tell that practically all of them, including a grey haired and heavily bearded old man and his wife, were simply camera enthusiasts. Despite the fact that the place was packed full, I saw that no one bought anything, not even a roll of film. Curious and sharp-looking eyes were intently focussed on the displayed photographic equipment, which appeared to be rather too expensive for them.

I examined the latest model of a Russian Zoki camera with an *f*1.5 lens. It was a complete replica of a Leica camera. It was selling for the sum of seventy-five roubles (seventy-five

U.S. dollars). I picked up another camera for sale. This was an old Leica model proper. It looked rusty and certainly appeared to need a new body. It was an *f*2, and but for the name 'Leica' imprinted on its base I could not have recognized it. The price tag on it read 550 roubles.

I was interested in owning a Russian-made telephoto lens which had been recommended to me as one of the best lenses produced. I also wanted to buy 250 mm. of *f*2 which was prominently displayed on one of the shelves in the shop. I tried desperately without any success to negotiate its price with the sales clerks, but no one could understand a word of English. However, they all seemed very amused and tickled by my presence and embarrassing difficulties.

The sales clerks were all young ladies in their late teens, either blonde or black-haired and rather cute- looking. The orderly atmosphere of the shop was now interrupted by giggling voices and young smiling faces. Most of the aged ones around curiously sized me up with sullen expressions and wide-open mouths.

Amid all this tragi-comedy, a little girl of about five years with a pony-tail, emerged from the crowd and stood in front of me. She started fingering the palm of my hand and my skin. She turned around to her mother, said something in Russian and burst into tears.

From what I could sense, the little girl thought first that I might have been exceptionally sun-tanned. She soon

discovered that she was wrong, and, in fear of being molested by me, sought the protective and convenient refuge of her mother. She hurriedly ran forward and clutched the child. They disappeared behind the onlookers, who were by now laughing their heads off.

I was getting fed-up. I felt I was becoming an object of ridicule. As the sales girls and I could not make any sense out of one another, I decided to forego the telephoto lens. As I turned round, making for the exit, a lean, frail-faced man with an inconspicuous figure placed his hand on my left shoulder.

'I am sorry, friend. Please do not mind if I talk to you. My name is Gunther and I only want to help you, because I see that you are having trouble with the sales girls. You see, many people do not speak English in Russia, especially the young ones. Now I will help you to translate.

It was unbelievable after all this trouble. The man, who could not have been over fifty years old, spoke English fluently and clearly. He continued:

'I have not had a chance to speak English for more than twenty years. Normally I do not live in Moscow. I come here from Novobrisko to spend my three months' summer holidays.'

'I certainly would like to introduce myself to you too. It is very kind of you to come to my assistance.'

After I had introduced myself we struggled back through the curious and amused crowd. The attention of the shop assistants and bystanders was pinned on Gunther and myself, no doubt in relief that I had at last found someone among them who could understand me.

With Gunther's assistance I bought the telephoto lens for the sum of fifty-four roubles. It was safely parcelled, and Gunther, who by now had volunteered to keep company with me wherever I wanted to go, carried the parcel firmly under his arm.

He pointed out that if I wanted any more photographic equipment he could show me a special store 'where everything from a used aeroplane to a pin' could be bought very cheaply, 'at least one-fourth of the original price'. As it so happened, I was in the market to buy a camera tripod, flash-gun and portable radio. We walked in the direction of the shop, which he said was about six blocks away from the camera shop.

'You told me in the camera shop when you introduced yourself that you are interested to mix with the Russian people. I think I am right?'

I nodded in agreement.

'Well, my friend, it may be a little difficult. I myself was captured in the last war as a German Nazi, and people can

tell that I am not Russian by origin, especially when we are talking together. I will help you, take you dancing, to theatres and many places of good interest. If it is a beautiful Russian woman you want to meet I will fix that for you. It is not my habit to do this, but you are an African visitor to my country,' he remarked shyly.

At his cautious remark about the Russian woman I became rather more interested. As we walked down the main street, making for the shop, he enquired: 'How is the life of the people in Western Europe and America, especially the Negroes? I think all my family and relatives perished in the last war. I was captured in Leningrad and spent many years in Siberia. I am lucky to be alive today. Maybe I have one sister living in America. I was in America as a seaman in 1926.'

I encouraged: 'The conditions of people in America and Europe are probably better than in Russia. The present American Government is doing its very best to integrate Negroes in all phases of American life. There still exist a few ignorant elements in American society who strongly resist integration.

'In Europe new buildings and reconstructions are taking the place of slum areas, ruined houses and industrial factories destroyed in most of Western Europe, particularly England and Germany, during the last war.'

In a quiet and sorrowful voice he admitted: 'Hitler committed many bad mistakes as well as doing many good things for Germany. He built and gave fame and power to Germany, and later set it aflame out of greediness. He was just as greedy and over-ambitious as our Khrushchev is today in Russia. Khrushchev's end is likely to be as disastrous as that of Hitler.'

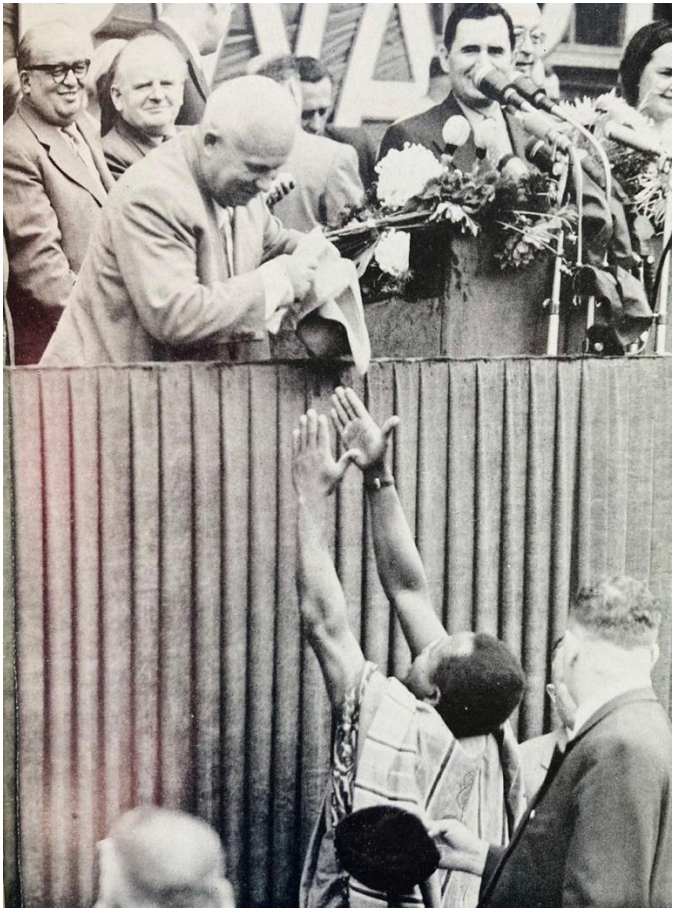
He quenched the butt of the cigarette he was smoking and dumped it in a nearby public steel basket provided for rubbish. He wiped his mouth clean and continued:

'Consider the living conditions of the Russian people today, and I am one of them. Russia is now my country, you know. Because I am a mining engineer I was made a Russian citizen and was told to marry a Russian woman, despite the fact that my real wife and children may still be alive in Germany. Anyway, let us not talk about my life. It is full of sorrow and bad memories.'

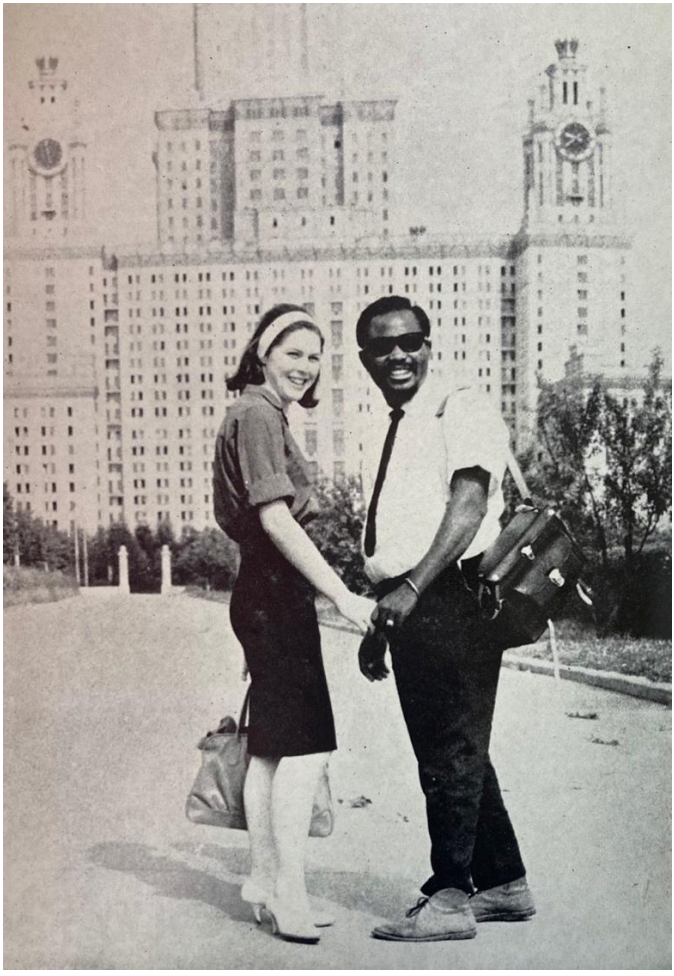
He paused momentarily. I could see that he was disturbed and his haggard face became suddenly expressionless. He added: 'You see, in Russia today people are not very happy with Khrushchev. There is plenty of food, shoes, clothing and every necessary thing. You can buy them in the government co- operative shops if you can afford it, but then they are all very expensive. People have no money to spend, yet they work very hard. How long this kind of existence will continue we do not know.

'Everybody is afraid of Khrushchev. Stalin had his bad side, but also he was a good man and you cannot say that he was a racialist like Khrushchev, who hates the Jews. Stalin's own wife was a Jewess, you know.'

We soon found ourselves mounting the steps of the shop Gunther had recommended. As we were about to enter the shop he drew closer to me and made the remark I have already quoted about Stalin's fascination by some of the people in present-day Russia. After he had looked around to make sure he had not been overheard we made for the main counter.



Greetings to Khrushchev



Author and Helena. Moscow university in the background

Inside, the shop looked like an auctioneer's stall. On show were radios, watches, fans, gardening tools and house furniture, saxophones, camera equipment, and admittedly everything from 'an aeroplane to a pin'. They were all second-hand goods. Most of them were faded in colour and in a rusty state.

Strangely enough, all the goods on sale were of different origin, most of them made in Japan, Western Europe and America. There were Sony radios and Canon cameras from Japan, Longines watches, Olivetti typewriters, Philips electric shavers, saxophones, binoculars and other kinds of products made in Western Europe and America.

'In this shop,' declared Gunther, 'you can sell and buy many things. Many foreign tourists who come to Russia and run out of money come to this shop and sell their belongings.'

A few minutes after we had arrived in the shop two men dressed in long blue coats, who no doubt were working there, quickly walked up to me.

'Maybe you like we buy your Nikon and Rollieflex cameras. We pay you good money for them and you can buy Russian souvenirs.' This was proudly said in halting English.

'Nothing doing, gentlemen. I have only come here to buy, not to sell.'

Gunther and I eyed each other, amused at this spontaneous approach. The men quickly vanished behind a curtained office. With Gunther's help I bought a flash-gun and a tripod. Both were Russian-made and amounted to fifty roubles.

After we left the shop Gunther suggested that we walk about the town and later go to a special 'dine- and-dance' restaurant on the outskirts of the city. I agreed.

We went from one place to another. Most of our time was spent window-shopping at G.U.M ., also known as the People's Shopping Arcades, situated in Red Square opposite Lenin's mausoleum.

'Here,' I said to Gunther, 'is Chicago's Marshal Field department store.' G.U.M. arcades occupied a whole block in area.

It was about 6 p.m. when we were through window-shopping and finally made for the restaurant. It was on the fringe of a row of tall, newly constructed twelve-storey apartment buildings. The apartments, though of simple design, were luxurious in appearance. They were on the route to Moscow Airport. I was uncharitable enough to wonder whether they were built there to impress arriving foreign tourists.

Once we were inside the 'dance-and-dine' restaurant, neat and cosy, its arrangement reminded me of

pseudo-Bohemian clubs in London's Soho, or, may I suggest, The Establishment Club? The main difference seemed to be the three-piece band, made up of a saxophonist, drummer and guitarist, playing some of Bing Crosby's old songs. Three couples were cuddling and dancing on the tiled floor.

Soon after we sat at a table a white-jacketed waiter appeared with a pencil and paper in hand. He murmured some words to Gunther in Russian. Gunther turned to me and translated: The band-leader would like to know if you are an American Negro. Also, he wants you to choose a song you would like to hear.'

"This is an honour,' I replied. 'If it is no trouble I would like to hear the "St. Louis Blues", and tell them that I am not an American.'
Gunther looked perturbed.

'"St. Louis Blues", I don't think they will know that. Anyway, we shall see,' he commented.

He jotted it down in Russian and handed it to the waiter. During the intermission the leader of the band, crew-cut and neatly suited in grey, looking like an Italian gigolo, came to our table. He told Gunther that he had never heard of 'St. Louis Blues' and his band could not play it. He offered to play, instead, 'Muskrat Ramble'. We agreed and thanked him. The band made a good job of the number, particularly the saxophonist. All the couples present were on their feet

dancing, except for Gunther and myself. Without lady companions the music made good listening.

We consumed two dishes of Hungarian goulash. I was now feeling much better. I could not dissuade Gunther from paying the bill. He had already ordered and paid for the food before we sat down. This I found to be a common practice in most of the public restaurants, cafes and tea shops in Moscow. Pay before you eat.

We left the place about 9 p.m. for a coffee shop back in the centre of the town. Over our cups of coffee the topic of conversation reverted to Stalin and Khrushchev and of their notoriety and popularity, as the case may be.

'In many ways Stalin was kindly and thoughtful, while he was also ruthless. Khrushchev is the opposite of everything Stalin stood for, especially in consideration for the life of the ordinary man.

'Khrushchev always criticizes the capitalists and the West as being aggressors and colonialists. True, we people in Russia are all behind Khrushchev's criticism of America, Britain and France as capitalists. But the trouble with Khrushchev is that he is much more of a capitalist than all the American capitalists put together.'

I interrupted and demanded to know from Gunther why he had come to this presumptuous conclusion.

'All right, I will give you good reasons, which many Russians always ask themselves. You remember the time Khrushchev went to speak at the U.N. general assembly in New York a few years ago? He took with him all the members of his family: his brother-in-law, his sister-in-law and every member of his household. He exploited the government and the people's money for his family's selfish interest. Before this happened wenRussians always thought it was only in the capitalist countries that people acted like that.

'Then you will remember the Hungarian revolution, when many innocent people were murdered. I think you know more about this than I do. In Russia we know very little about what really happened in Hungary then, except what *Pravda* told us.'

Most of the time he talked in a low, cautious and refined voice. It was now getting dark.

Just on whose side Gunther was, Stalin's or Khrushchev's, remained a mystery to me. I was feeling tired. We agreed to meet the following morning, which was a Saturday, at 10 a.m. outside my hotel.

Before we parted company I asked him if he would kindly bring along and introduce to me the Russian girl he had mentioned earlier.

This he confidently guaranteed. He added: 'A beautiful one too. Her name is Helena and you will like her because she is very sociable and speaks some English too.'

'I shall be looking forward very much to meeting this sociable Helena,' I said to him as we shook hands on the steps of the Hotel Ukraine.

I waited, watching him as he strode along rapidly, crossed over the bridge and vanished into the night. He was, in his own little way, a man of mystery.

VI

It was now Saturday. As arranged, Gunther showed up on time, waiting at the entrance of the hotel.

With him was a stunningly beautiful, well-built girl with flaming red hair falling down over her shoulders. So here was Helena. Something about her reminded me of Rita Hayworth at an early stage of her film career.

Helena and I were introduced. I took a closer look at her. Her face was delicate and fragile, with high cheek-bones. She wore a tight black skirt and over it hung a loose red shirt, buttoned down the front and partly open to form a plunging neckline. She had shapely legs and wore no stockings. Her high-heeled white shoes were of Italian make, elegant and sharply pointed.

Around her straight, shiny hair she wore a pink velvet Alice band. She could easily have been taken for a French mannequin. I was amazed when she told me that she was only twenty years old and an ordinary counter assistant at G.U.M.'s leather department. Helena had about her a cool, accommodating and unpretentious manner. She could not speak English very well, but understood every word I spoke.

Gunther had warned me in advance that Helena would have to report for work at midday, as she was on the afternoon shift. I took the warning and watched for an opportunity to ask her to meet me the following day. She had no objection.

Gunther had wandered away from us to buy three cones of ice-cream. We were now in the grounds of a Russian Orthodox church where he had taken us.

'Tomorrow, Sunday, I no working. My friend Gunther going Kiev, after five days come back. So I will meet you tomorrow morning. But no tell Gunther,' she said in carefully chosen words.

We agreed to meet in the lobby of my hotel by the elevators the following morning at 10.30.

'You must arrive lobby before I come, because maybe people ask me questions. Also tomorrow when we meet, and anybody come speak me in Russian, you answer to them in English that we are American tourists and we no speak or

understand Russian. Then no trouble make for me police for going out with foreigner.'

This was getting too complicated for me, nevertheless I had to comply with her request.

At noon we all parted company in Red Square. Gunther had to see about some official matters at the Ministry of Heavy Industries, while Helena went to work. I spent the rest of the afternoon taking pictures and wandering aimlessly about the city. To kill time I went to see a Russian film about adolescent delinquency in Russia. I found it boring, as I could not understand any of the dialogue, so I left early and was back in the hotel for supper by 6 p.m.

At the restaurant in the hotel I could not help overhearing a lively conversation going on at the next table between two American visitors. They looked and acted like tourists, with cameras and binoculars slung over their shoulders.

The first of the two men was speaking as I sat down. He was stoutly built, balding and bespectacled, and looked in his late fifties.

'. . . Why, Bill, it's been three goddam' weeks since I been here and every Sunday I looked all over this goddam' Moscow and just couldn't find a Catholic church. Tomorrow is another goddam' Sunday. What in the hell am I going to do? I've just got to go to Mass,' he said with an indignant air.

The second American, who was now getting ready to say his piece, was much younger. He was tall, handsome and neatly dressed in charcoal grey. He was also a crude fellow, full of profane words and had open dislike for Russia. He was certainly of very little or no help to his friend. Rather discouragingly he commented:

'Hell, Peter, you should know too darned well that this ain't good old New York. Man, this is Russia, a communist country and there ain't no goddam' synagogue, Catholic or Protestant church around here.' These remarks poured from the corner of his mouth. At the other side of his mouth a half-smoked cigarette dangled. 'Them Russians are all pagans and atheists. Like that guy Christ, Christianity in Russia has been stabbed to death for good after the assassination of the Czar. Forget the whole damn' thing.'

'But what the hell am I going to tell the folks back home, especially my mother-in-law, who hates my guts and everything Russian? You see I am always batting for these goddam' Russians as regular guys back home. And everybody thinks I'm crazy.'

His companion was quick to interject: 'Them folks back home are sure right. Listen, buddy, you must be goddam' sick. You sure need a head-shrinker [meaning a psychiatrist] more than that guy Khrushchev if you think for one moment that you will find any church down here. That guy Khrushchev has liquidated all them churches; Jews, Christians and every religious sect you can think of. There

ain't any religion here no more. Wait until you get back to the States. Cardinal Spellman will still be waiting for you.

As he heard this, Bill became morose and poured himself a large cup of black coffee. I watched him as he took two white pills from a small bottle, swallowed them and then quickly gulped down the cup of coffee. He cleared his throat. 'Pardon me.'

I could not help buttoning into their conversation. We were separated by only an empty table.

'Excuse me,' I shouted across to them, 'I happened to overhear your conversation. I do hope you have no objection if I make a suggestion?'

'Why, bud, there ain't nothing to stop you, go right ahead,' contributed Pete, charmingly, while Bill gazed at me in curiosity.

'Well, I was just wondering if your friend—I believe his name is Bill—has tried to enlist the help of a Russian guide. I think a guide can show him to a Catholic church in Moscow without any trouble. I have seen some Russian Orthodox and Baptist churches myself, and you might be able to find a Catholic church.'

Lazily, Bill got up from his chair and dragged himself through the tables and chairs on his way to mine.

'Is sure good of you, fellow. By the way, my name is William Sutton—friends call me Bill. I'm from New York. This country sure is a lousy place. I'll be glad to get back to the States. Ain't nothing in this place.

'Yes, to answer your question. Them Russian guides are more spies than the professional espionage spies we get back in the States. The F.B.I. is sure a chicken compared with these Russian guides. I keep asking and reminding our guide about a Catholic church, but she is of no help. She is sloppier than any other woman I've met. You just can't depend on them guides. We've been taken to see every goddam' place of no interest at all to us—industrial exhibition, parks, Bolshoi Theatre, art gallery, Red Square and all that rot. All these places we could have gone ourselves, but she won't leave us alone. Right now our guide and her friend are in the toilet. I sure hope they drown themselves in the sink. 'He stopped abruptly and glanced in the direction of the door. 'Dammit, here come the two bitches.'

I turned round. It was Natasha and another lady making for where we sat. By now I had finished my dinner.

'So long, Bill, it's been nice talking to you, I'll see you around.'

I waved to Natasha, and, in order to avoid any further political argument with her, said goodbye and quickly left

the restaurant, leaving Bill and Pete with the two ladies.

'Worry not about going Catholic church, Mr. Sutton. Tomorrow I bring you and your friend see agricultural farm exhibitions. Many bushels of wheat you see. ... ' Natasha's friend was saying as I walked away.

VII

For the next few days, until three days before I was to leave Moscow for Tashkent, Helena and I were constant companions. She had requested and been granted two weeks' summer vacation. In an excited voice she told me that two days prior to my departure from Moscow she would be going by train with her family to the Caspian Sea—the Riviera of Russia. There she would spend the rest of her holiday swimming and sun-bathing. She was greatly looking forward to this.

Bitterly enough, as it happened she never made it to the Caspian Sea. The day before she was to leave Moscow with her family Helena was apprehended in my hotel room by three plain-clothed policemen, who unceremoniously burst in on us and bundled her away. On what charge the stern-faced Russians would not say.

That was the last I saw of Helena, despite all efforts on my part to discover what had happened after she had been taken away. Gunther, who by this time must have returned

from Kiev, was also nowhere to be found. It was all very strange and pathetic to me. I felt terribly disturbed.

During the few days that Helena and I spent together trekking the streets of Moscow nothing unusual or politically suspicious happened. Our relationship, like that of two new friends, was absolutely innocent. There was no question of 'an affair' nor did we engage in any espionage activities. I knew that if this was the case I too would have been arrested.

Most evenings Helena and I went dancing at the 'dine-and dance' restaurant. We also spent our time taking photos of what I considered of human interest. Besides this we visited public parks, museums, historical places or just strolled around the city. We never parted company later than 9 p.m. every day, as she always warned, 'I must home supper-time with family.'

So when Helena was arrested, while I helplessly watched, I found it most difficult to believe that the reason for her arrest could have had anything to do with me. Yet somehow I felt that this could possibly be the real reason, as I was a foreign tourist.

Whenever I had enquired of her Helena told me freely what she thought of life under the communist regime, of Joseph Stalin and Nikita Khrushchev, whether she would ever like to travel outside Russia, and of her ambition in life.

Unlike Gunther, as she talked to me, either walking slowly along in the streets, or sitting in the parks, she was not particularly careful or suspicious of passers-by.

The day before Helena's arrest we had arranged that our meeting place for the next morning would be outside the main entrance to Lenin's Park of Culture. We were to meet at 10 a.m.

That morning I was fifteen minutes early in arriving, and waited for Helena's appearance. A few minutes before ten I saw at a distance a striking figure standing halfway over the Lenin Bridge and gracefully leaning her elbows on the iron railing. The bridge was a few yards away from the park, and watching the red- headed lady I could not help thinking that she might be Helena. I walked in her direction. She was now gazing curiously at the current of Moscow River. As I came closer, I saw that she was, indeed, Helena.

She was all smiles, flashing her white teeth, and was in a really boisterous mood. She was attractively dressed in a navy blue suit and black shoes. Her wavy hair was up in a french roll.

Hand in hand, we walked from the bridge back to the park and made for the amusement section, where we spent two hours. From the Park of Culture, Helena suggested that we go to see the famous Moscow Glass Bridge, the university and return to the city for lunch. We agreed also that later in

the evening we should return to my hotel for dinner on the understanding that she would be back home before 9 p.m.

As we were walking around the university grounds, one of three black-skinned men came down the steps of the library building and hailed me.

'Are you one of the American Negroes attending the Peace Congress in Moscow?' he demanded.

'No, I am not an American. Of course, I have been to see the conference. I actually came to Moscow on my own, and I come from Africa.'

Shyly he smiled. By this time his two friends had come closer.

'Oh, I am glad to know that. Actually, by the way you dress and overhearing you talk, we thought you were an American. Anyway, I am Julius from Kenya and these two friends of mine are from Guinea. We are students at Lumumba University. Which part of Africa do you come from?'

We shook hands all around as I went on to answer their questions. I introduced Helena to them. Soon they were engaged in lively Russian conversation with her. Now I was becoming rather suspicious, or perhaps I should say jealous. I was thinking that they might want to pull a fast one on me, as I could not understand a word of Russian. As I did

not want to lose Helena to these Russian-speaking Africans, I decided to arrange another meeting with them, alone.

'Mr. Ajala, I am sure some of our friends at the Lumumba University would like to meet you too. We have also about forty Nigerian students in Russia. In fact, one of them is my good friend, you might know him. His name is Lawal and I can have him telephone you tonight at your hotel.'

I was anxious to get rid of them while Helena was around. Somehow I knew that one fellow was getting too friendly with her. I hurriedly jotted down my telephone and room number at the hotel. I was taking no chances by hanging around them any longer.

'Fellow Africans, it's been nice meeting you. Here is my telephone number, kindly pass it on to Lawal and tell him that I will wait for him to telephone me at the hotel this evening. I shall be back at six.'

Reluctantly by this time, I again shook their hands to avoid any further exchange of words between my countrymen and Helena. The one who appeared to be really keen on her flashed a big final smile in her direction as we turned and walked away. After a few yards I looked back and noticed the same fellow still standing there, watching Helena as she walked along. This time I possessively put my arm around her and heaved a great sigh of relief, at the same time chuckling inwardly at the whole situation.

We walked over into the main street and got into a taxi to go to the Glass Bridge. We left the taxi about a quarter of a mile from the bridge and walked the rest of the way, going through the grounds of the Moscow Stadium, which is a short distance from the bridge.

After spending less than an hour at the stadium we strolled along slowly to the bridge. By this time we were involved in discussions on the living conditions and political life in Russia.

During informal discussions, among many other things Helena pointed out that both Stalin and Khrushchev had one thing in common.

'Stalin before die was big dictator. Khrushchev now biggest dictator and no good man for Russia. Stalin no like war with any country. Instead war, Stalin build many factories, big houses, give food everybody cheap. Russian people no spend much money buy food and clothes. Many big roads, bridges, railways and very, very big houses, like Ukraine Hotel, G.U.M ., Metro and airport, all these built by Stalin.'

She went on to say:

'Also, I tell to you that Stalin good friend to Churchill, Rossevelliti [meaning President Roosevelt] and many foreign government men. All Russian people like very much Stalin. I no like Khrushchev, but I am liking Stalin much.

He very goodman. Maybe Stalin die because somebody kill with medicine.'

Helena further disclosed that Stalin was still popular with the Russian masses. Khrushchev's display of violent abhorrence and discredit of Stalin seems to have increased Stalin's popularity among the people. Stalin's shadow appears to cast a mysterious aura of unknown authority and influence over the younger generations. Secretly he remains a hero and an idol of most of the people. He creates what one might call the revolutionary myth in the mind of the average Russian, the tone of which keeps the memory of Lenin alive, for example.

For Nikita Khrushchev Helena had no words of praise, only of outright contempt. In her opinion Khrushchev is a bully and an opportunist.

'Khrushchev always like all Russian people believe he good government man for workers, just like Trotsky. You see, Stalin and Trotsky make big fight after Lenin dead. Trotsky good man also. Khrushchev no like Stalin because he born Grozia [Georgia] and Khrushchev Ukraine. Stalin for Jewish men in government, like Kaganovich.'

As she said this in halting English we were strolling over Moscow's famous Glass Bridge. The wind was blowing her long red hair slightly over her beautiful face. She brushed her hair aside and then continued.

'Always Khrushchev is making trouble and war with America and many bombs. This no good. We make friends, not enemy, with all countries is better.'

Helena found it most difficult to express herself in English, and it took all my effort and concentration to piece her words together.

She gave me the impressions, some of which I myself found difficult to believe, that Khrushchev had done very little or nothing to improve the living conditions of the people. There were, she contended, low wages paid to the workers after they had laboured all day. On top of this there was heavy taxation. The cost of goods in the government-operated stores was terribly high. In Helena's opinion Khrushchev had no regard for the welfare of the workers and the common man.

I for one never knew or saw Stalin's Russia, but I must admit that from what I saw of Khrushchev's Russia I had second thoughts. The impression I formed of the people, on whose faces I read as much happiness as dejection, whether they were in open parks, theatres, eating and dancing places or on the streets, was mostly in contradiction to Helena and Gunther's views. Apart from my own fear of possible arrest if I asked questions of many people, the language barrier made it difficult for me to confirm the validity of Khrushchev's fame or notoriety among his fellow countrymen.

What increasingly impressed though puzzled me about the people and the country were their contrasts. There was the progress or reformation of the society from its once rigidly fear-ridden state to a freer and happier condition; the spontaneous curiosity of the people towards foreigners; the ambitious and successful projects bombarding the country in such fields as industry and housing, and the great thirst for knowledge of anything outside the Soviet Union.

In Moscow and such places as Leningrad and Kiev any inquisitive tourist can easily sense the contrast between the people as they are supposed to be and the people as they so formidably are in real life.

On one side of present-day Moscow are wretched, dilapidated, thatched houses, most of them built in the days of the Czar. On the other side one finds imposing newly built and breath-taking blocks of modern apartments, crowned by TV aerials. This is the mark of progress and of Moscow's desperate need for new houses to relieve congested areas.

It takes very little effort for anyone to discover that slum areas, with their beggars, overcrowding and wretched wooden huts, are still very much a part of Russian life today. New and modern housing projects display part of the outstanding progress in Khrushchev's regime. Another sign of change is the dignified Hall of Congress in the heart of the City, built in a modern yet conservative style of architecture.

In all the food shops I visited in Moscow and other places foodstuffs were mostly tinned. On street corners and butchers' stores people had to queue in order to buy fresh fruit, vegetables and meat.

It is rather unfortunate, I must say, that the balance of an economy which can afford to finance military and missile bases on a grand scale all over the Soviet Union, and in some cases abroad, has difficulty

in getting meat, fresh fruit and vegetables to the food stores. This, if I may venture to say, is probably what my two friends meant about Khrushchev's slackness.

There is no doubt that in the past, people outside the Soviet Union have been consistently misled about conditions inside Russia.

I could not help noticing that general living standards have been slowly improving. There is certainly emerging in Russia today a new progressive state of mind.

I have not much confidence in public polls, such as those conducted in the Soviet Union in the middle of 1962. They have a definite tinge of propaganda and calculated misrepresentation. However, the outcome of such polls should be briefly mentioned.

Opinions of the people were sought on the improvement of living conditions in the past five years. A total of 1,600 were

reported to have cast their votes: 73% agreed that the living conditions were getting better; 7% revealed that there had been a change for the worse; while 20% were indifferent to either side.

Apart from my distasteful and disheartening experience where Helena's misfortune was concerned, I am convinced that the mind of the average Russian today is a little more enlightened about the world outside the Soviet Union and vice versa.

Under Khrushchev's regime he has a better life, the desire to stand up and be counted as a member of the Universe. He is better clothed and conscious of modern fashion and social progress. The industrial economy and agriculture of the land is slowly but surely catching up with the needs of the country. If not for the regime's concentration on the production of heavy machinery the supply of food and everyday commodities for Russians would be in abundance.

In contrast to my impressions of 1957, Russia, though still a dictatorial regime where power is centralized, has far better living conditions today. Quality and not quantity of goods seems to be the order of the day.

A young, disciplined and affluent set, craving for knowledge and Western know-how, is moving rapidly into positions once held by ruthless die-hards of a rigid regime.

Once stern, unhappy and bitter faces in parks, shops, restaurants and on the streets are replaced by laughing and curious faces of both youths and adults, male and female alike. Despite the many years of continuous anti—Western-particularly anti-American— propaganda, there is a forthright eagerness on the part of the Russians for friendship with people of all races, religions and nationalities. With the average Russian, the talk of war is abhorred. 'Peace and friendship is what we want with America, not war,' you will hear stated everywhere.

Khrushchev is known to indulge in more travel to remote areas of the Soviet Union than many Western leaders in their own countries. He is aware that to keep the candle of his fame among his people burning he must make sacrifices and impress them beyond doubt.

Khrushchev, from what I saw of him face-to- face, is an extrovert and an optimist. I do not see him as the 'humane realist' he wants the world to see, considering his inconsistency over East Germany, Hungary and Poland.

What remains to be seen is the fulfilment of Khrushchev's promise to his countrymen that a brighter future is awaiting them. He guarantees a massive investment in agriculture in the next few years—more tractors, fertilizers and plant—and bread and butter instead of guns, or Gargarin going up into orbit.

4 *Afro-Asian Students in Russia*

IT WAS seven in the morning. My room-mate, another Nigerian, who was the chief editor of one of the influential newspapers in Lagos, had left Moscow a few days ahead of me for Berlin on his way home. I was still lazily lying in bed, remorsefully thinking over the incident of the previous night involving Helena's arrest in my room.

Half an hour later I went out for a copy of the *Daily Worker*, edited and published in London. This and another communist journal printed in New York were the only newspapers in English which could be bought in the Soviet Union. All other non-communist newspapers from abroad were banned.

I had hopefully expected a telephone call the evening before from the Nigerian student Lawal. However, he did not ring. I had two more days to spend in the city before going on to a few other places, including Tashkent, where I would board an Aeroflot for New Delhi.

After a few weeks in Moscow, as I had discovered, a person with itching feet cannot help feeling restless, bored and, above all, de-personalized and out of circulation.

This was my cheerless mood when the telephone in my room rang.

'Is that room 802?' the masculine voice at the other end enquired.

"Well, then, sir, you must be Mr. Ajala from Nigeria. My name is Mustapha Saliu Lawal. I come from Lagos, Nigeria. My friends who met you yesterday told me about you. I have read a lot about you in the Nigerian papers before I came to Russia, and one of your brothers, now in London, is a very good friend of mine. I am now downstairs with two other Nigerian friends of mine.'

I asked him if, after they had eaten breakfast with me, they could take me along to their university and residential quarters. He had no objection.

Lawal was a shy, handsome and lean fellow. He could have been about twenty-two years old. Nonchalantly he introduced his two friends.

"This is Tunde. He is a medical student and has been here for four years. This second gentleman is George. He has been studying in Russia for seven years. He is an engineering student.'

Tunde was heftier and taller than the other two. His round, moon-shaped face was intelligent and very African. He had

a flat nose, on top of which were balanced horn-rimmed glasses. He was also more talkative and outspoken.

George was short, self-assured and level- headed. He made sure that he had his say on every topic we discussed. They displayed cultured manners, within the scope of the traditionally free and excited manner of African conversation, where everyone seems to be talking at the top of his voice, and all to be speaking at the same time.

The first part of our talk, as we ate a breakfast consisting of steak, poached eggs, yoghurt and black Russian bread, was devoted to African resurgence, nationalism and particularly the events going on in the Congo.

I asked them some questions on their stay in Soviet Russia. Were they experiencing any racial discrimination in public places or on the streets? Was there any truth in the reports that African students were being systematically indoctrinated and taught communist ideologies? How were they received generally by the Russians?

'Just before I came to Moscow I was reading in one of the

African papers,' I put bluntly to them, 'a serialized article by one of three students, all of whom had to leave Russia because they were being discriminated against, taught the workings of communism and insulted when in the company of their girl friends. The same African who wrote

these articles stated that he was often publicly attacked and beaten up by young Russian hoodlums.'

I could see while I was talking that each and every one of them wanted to interrupt me and express his views. I called for order.

It was Lawal whom I asked to speak first.

'You see, Mr. Ajala, there is no truth at all in what those boys have written in the newspapers in Africa, Europe and America. They are all a bunch of American stooges. While they are students here they go secretly to the American Embassy and ask for help to go on scholarship to study in America. The Russian Government allows students to leave the country whenever they wish to go. Once they arrive back in West Berlin, the American officials meet them and use them as tools of propaganda in the Western countries.

'The Russian people are very nice, and the professors at the university help us a lot with our studies. Maybe there is some discrimination here, but in America it is worse. I have no regrets in coming to Russia.'

Tunde was anxious to speak, and I had to keep restraining him until his turn came.

'Mr. Ajala, I am sorry to say I do not agree with some of the things Lawal says. He is only speaking for himself. I have been in Russia for four years and have had more experience

than him. We all know about the articles those boys wrote in the papers. There is some truth in them and there are some lies. Russians are good to us, but also some of them discriminate against us, especially at the university. The girls in the shops, at the Moscow University and the ones you meet casually on streets like us. They go out with us and come to our parties, but the young men, especially in the Moscow University, hate our guts.'

'Well,' I interrupted, 'how about the story of this African who left Moscow University because he was being set upon and beaten up in his room by Russian fellow students. Can anybody tell me something about that?

George opened his mouth to speak, but heavily built Tunde jumped in:

'Listen, George, shut your mouth for a minute, I will tell Mr. Ajala about this, because I knew the chap very well.'

George relaxed back in his chair. Lawal who by now had his eyes trained on Tunde, rested his chin on his left hand.

"This fellow' (he mentioned his name) 'was my school-mate back home. He is the biggest liar I have ever met. He was more than a nuisance: he was a disgrace to the African students in Moscow. It is true that he was beaten up by the Russian students in his room at the dormitory, but that was because he committed an immoral act with a little girl who was only fourteen years old. In the end he was dismissed

from the university for this and many other reasons. He was never a good student, always going after girls.'

'Don't you go after girls?' I managed to enquire. They all smiled.
'Yes, I do, but not every night like this chap.'
I ventured to ask why it was that Russian male students opposed African students dating Russian girls.

'I think the root of it is jealousy,' aired Lawal. 'Many of them read in *Pravda* about the racial problems in America. You know, like Little Rock. And they think we are like monkeys and must not go out with their beautiful girls. But we can't help that; after all, we aren't queers.'

Tunde added: 'Of course, not all Russian people are like that. Most of them are very understanding and sociable with us. The girls do not care about what their men say; even in the streets Russian boys abuse the girls for going out with "darkies". Tonight we are having a party in my room at the dormitory. You must come and meet some of these beautiful girls.'

I accepted the invitation. I glanced over to where George was quietly seated, listening to the discussion as if he were not with us.

'Maybe you would like to say something now that our friends here have finished.'

'I don't mind, I am only watching them as they talk in such loud voices for everybody in the restaurant to hear. When we all talk so loudly, all at the same time, these Russians think that we are all fresh from the jungle of the Congo.'

We all roared with laughter as he spoke. Tunde almost rolled out of his chair. He scrambled up, looking embarrassed.

George went on: 'I myself am married to a Russian girl and they make good wives. It is not true that they don't like black people here. There are more than 250 foreign students in Russia from Africa and Asia who are married to Russian girls. My friend forgot to tell you of many privileges we foreign students are given here. And if I am wrong anyone may correct me.'

He stopped briefly and looked into their faces. Tunde and Lawal were smoking cigarettes.

'After we are accepted to come to study in Russia the Russian Government pays for our passage. Also our tuition, textbooks and lodgings are paid by the government. Every foreign student in Russia is on full scholarship. Not a single person need worry about his expenses and food. Mr. Ajala, there are more than 1,750 foreign students at Lumumba Friendship University, and all are on full scholarships, just like the Russian students all over the country. Now what more can we ask for, or what other country in the world will do this for us? That is why we Africans and Asians come to

study in Russia. The governments of America, Germany, France and Britain could afford to do the same, but they are not willing. So we come to Russia in a desperate search for knowledge and education.'

Trunde volunteered: 'In America today there are more than 6,000 foreign students in the universities. Perhaps only 300 of them are on American Government semi-scholarships, while the rest have to pay their own way.'

Lawal reminded: 'Each month every Russian student in the university is paid forty roubles as pocket- money by the government, but every foreign student receives ninety-five roubles—more than double the amount given to Russian students.'

'I can now see why the Russian male students are jealous of you guys. It is certainly not only for taking out their girl friends.'

It was 10.30 a.m. when we left the hotel restaurant on our way to the Lumumba Friendship University.

As I walked out of the hotel in the company of my friends, an incident occurred which in my opinion almost amounted to open discrimination. It concerned us and a taxi-driver.

From the hotel we walked towards a taxi-rank where one cab was parked. In the driver's seat was a man whose face

was buried between the pages of a newspaper. Just as we were a few yards from the taxi, the man glanced up and saw us coming in his direction. He quickly started the engine. For a moment we all thought he was going to open the doors of the cab for us. We were wrong. Instead, he stepped on the gas, moved slowly in our direction and quickly swerved the car to make a round-about turn.

My friends and I hailed him as he swept past. I ran quickly after him, and, luckily enough, his car was held up by three other cars which had stopped suddenly in front of him. I succeeded in reaching him in time, as he was waiting for the cars ahead to proceed. I could not speak Russian and I wanted to prevent him from going until my friends came up, so I opened his door.

He was aghast. I knew that my friends, all of whom could speak fluent Russian, would tell him why I had stopped him.

My companions finally arrived on the scene. I was now breathing heavily.

'Why,' I asked Lawal to translate to the taxi- driver, 'did he leave the taxi-rank when he saw us coming? This, I believe, is a taxi and it is not occupied.'

Lawal translated what I had said. He replied in an excited voice. I was looking at his face as Lawal relayed to me what

the man had said. He was nervous, fearful and his hands were trembling.

'No, I did not go away because I saw you coming. My tyres need to be inflated because they are all going flat and need some air.'

As we were talking, a policeman came along and the story was related to him by the taxi-driver and Tunde. I saw the policeman take out his notebook and pencil, and jot down some notes. He exchanged a few words with the taxi-driver. I asked Lawal what was going on.

'The policeman asked for his licence and told the driver he was going to make a report on him to higher authorities. He ordered him to take us in the taxi to wherever we want to go.'

After we had thanked the police officer I refused to take the same taxi, and we walked over to the bridge. We soon saw another taxi approaching. The police officer, who was following us, flagged down the second taxi for us and we all squeezed into it.

Every indication showed that this had been a rare incident, one not likely to recur.

From the outside, the red brick, square and fading building of the Lumumba Friendship University at No. 5 Donskoy Proyezd, in a suburb of Moscow, could easily have been

mistaken for any city jail. It reminded me of the Holloway Prison in London.

As we waited on the other side of the road, opposite the university, while a terribly noisy electric passenger train passed us, I enquired from my African guides:

'Am I to believe that this is the university where you study?'

They all seemed to get the message. They glanced at one another.

'Yes, this is Lumumba Friendship University. You see, Mr. Ajala, we are temporarily housed here until a new university is built for us,' declared Lawal.

'But why here? It is a ghastly-looking place, if you ask me.'

'I see what you mean,' commented Tunde. 'Until we moved into the building it was a Russian military office and soldiers' sleeping quarters.'

I stated that it would have been much better if the students had been left to continue their studies at Moscow University.

'Why is it necessary to have one university for foreigners and another for Russians? Isn't that a kind of segregation?' I demanded. No one could volunteer an answer.

The train had by now passed by us. We hurriedly dashed across the slippery rail-lines and found ourselves on the pavement of the building.
At the time the university, where there were up to 2,000 foreign students from sixty-five countries, was not in full session. Certain departments were on holidays. I could see some of the students entering and leaving the four-storey building as we elbowed our way into the ground floor through a massive, crowded entrance.

In a lobby a bulky, stoutly built Russian woman was tying a black scarf over her rumpled hair. She was seated in front of a tiny table, her large body nearly submerging it completely.

Lawal quickly walked ahead of us to talk with her. As they were talking in Russian, I saw the old woman swinging her head to and fro, probably in disagreement with Lawal's request. Her face was bitter and unaccommodating.

Lawal returned and, again in Russian, murmured something to Tunde and George.

'What's going on here?' I enquired in an excited voice.

'I am sorry, Mr. Ajala, the lady is the receptionist. She will not allow any foreign visitor into the classrooms, especially with a camera. She says she would need a permit from the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Interior before you could pass through the lobby. She told me these are her strict instructions.

I burst out angrily: 'But this is absurd. Tell her that I am an African and have been to see the Moscow University without any difficulty. If she still refuses, then tell her that I am a good pal of Premier Khrushchev and I will report her.'

I was encircled by a handful of curious students. Some of them pointed out to me that the woman was very 'difficult to get along with and there was no chance of her having a change of heart. Tunde and Lawal returned to her to make another plea. Both soon returned. With or without a camera I was not to go into any of the classrooms as I could also be a journalist. That would make everything worse.

Some of the students watching us in the lobby walked out with us into the main street. They agreed to be photographed outside the building. Their faces ranged from Japanese, American, Kenyan, Indonesian, Argentinian, Indian, Ghanaian, Australian, and German to Arab.

From the university we proceeded to their dormitories about half a mile away.

The building of their residential quarters, L- shaped and painted white, was in a selective, quiet area and next to it was a block of newly built tall flats.

It had about 200 rooms. Tunde told me that there were six such buildings scattered all over Moscow. Despite the presence at the main door of a chain-smoking doorman, I

had no trouble getting in. I think that he might have taken me for one of the students.

I heard the gentleman warn: 'Keep the noise down in your room tonight, Tunde. Someone told me you are having one of those African wild parties.'

We walked through a number of corridors, climbed about three floors and soon we were in Tunde's room. On each door along the corridors I could see signs identifying students from such countries as Iraq, Egypt, U.S.A ., Ghana, Britain, Argentina, Philippines, Japan, Malaya, Holland, Guinea, Ethiopia, Iran and Canada.

Unlike the university dormitories in the West, I noticed another strange thing in the living quarters of these students. Male and female students live in the same building, on the same floor, and often in adjoining rooms. On one side of Tunde's room, for example, was that of an attractive lady from Indonesia and on the other side that of another lady. 'She comes from Brazil and every night you can hear her playing the guitar and singing South American songs.'

Tunde shared his room with two other foreign students and a Russian. In the room I found a number of the latest American jazz and African 'High Life' records lying on top of a big radiogram. A few minutes after we arrived, as we were listening to a Chubby Checker record, 'Twist all

Night', there came a knock on the door.

Tunde opened it. A voice exclaimed, 'Listen, lover boy, this party of yours tonight—do you provide the girls, or do we bring our own?'

He was an Indonesian with well-groomed hair and full of smiles. He had with him two other friends.

'I have got six beautiful girls coming,' Tunde replied.

I was introduced to the men. They sat themselves among us and soon everyone was twisting. The party had not started and there were no Russian girls in sight.

There was an intermission and the room was bustling with different nationalities: Africans, Indians, guitar-carrying Mexicans, Arabs and an American girl in knee-high black socks. She looked like a beatnik and wore a faded tweed dress.

I started talking to an African from Uganda and two Indonesians.

'Tell me this,' I asked, 'some of these boys who are married to Russian girls, they don't have any trouble leaving this country with their Russian wives, do they?'

The Uganda boy, who identified himself as Festus Ngomo, replied, 'So far none of them has been allowed to leave the country with his Russian wife.'

'Why is that?' I wanted to know.

'A fellow who wants to go back home with his wife is told by the Russian Government to leave the country first without his wife. After five years his wife will be allowed to join him. The whole set-up is rather strange, I must admit, and there are many of these boys married to Russians.'

I wanted to talk to some other foreign students apart from the Africans, so I wandered out of the crowded room into the corridor, where I saw another student. He was an Indonesian. His room was a few doors from Tunde's and his name was Ganis Suraho.

'How are you finding your stay in this country?' I asked him.

As the noise from Tunde's room filled the corridor, he invited me into his room, where he showed me a letter he had received from an Indonesian friend of his studying in the United States. From what I could gather from the letter, his friend in America was under the impression that the foreign students in Russia were living under oppressive and unhappy conditions. He fetched the carbon copy of his reply to his friend studying in America. In part it read:

'All the Indonesian students in the Soviet Union belong to the Association of Indonesian students. The Association now embraces more than 300 students. It co-ordinates the activities of the branches in Odessa, Kiev, Leningrad and Baku. We maintain close ties with our country through our Embassy.'

The letter continued: 'The main criterion of each student's mark at the university is his knowledge and ability—nothing else. Premier Khrushchev, at the opening of the new Friendship University, told us that the purpose of founding the university was to help the students of Asia, Africa and Latin America to become specialists, to acquire scientific knowledge that they might use when they get back to their countries.'

He tersely concluded: 'We are not taught communist ideologies.'

I left the students' dormitory for the hotel at 6 p.m ., after having promised to return by taxi for the party at 8 p.m.

I never made it back to the party, which had promised to be an hilarious event. I was feeling depressed, and found myself in deep thought over Helena's fate with the police. I went to bed early.

The following day I took off from Moscow.

5 *Drama in Meeting Khrushchev*

OFTEN dressed with little regard for fashion, tubby, and bald-headed, Nikita Khrushchev, the undoubted heir of Marshal Stalin, is to the Western allies, though in a milder way than Stalin, a ruthless dictator, warmonger, hard-core opportunist, as well as a cold- blooded murderer responsible for the death of many, particularly during the Hungarian revolution.

Whether it can be said that these damning accusations fit Khrushchev is not necessarily the view of the writer, who, under unorthodox circumstances, had the pleasure of meeting and talking to this controversial figure in East Berlin, and later in Moscow's Kremlin.

The first of my three meetings with Premier Khrushchev occurred one fateful day in the middle of August 1957, two days after I arrived in war-torn Berlin-the divided city of East and West Berlin. I was on my way from London to Warsaw by motor-scooter. The ordeal I experienced on the day in question, when my life was at stake, was one I would not willingly face again.

On the spur of the moment I broke through a throng of rifle-carrying, green-uniformed soldiers, as well as Russia's M.K.V.D. Security Police cordon, in an unsuccessful attempt to approach Khrushchev for a visa which would enable me to ride on my scooter to Moscow.

Khrushchev had come on a state visit to East Berlin. An excited, flag-waving and closely packed crowd had gathered in the Marx-Engelplatz, the main square of communist East Berlin, to welcome one of the most 'unpredictably controversial' statesmen of this modern age.

Notable figures in the entourage were moustachioed Mikoyan, baby-faced Gromyko, V. M. Molotov, as well as two outstanding and most feared Russian Secret Servicemen—Security Chief Colonels Ivan Serov and Woolweber of M.I.C.V.D. Khrushchev and his companions, standing solemnly on the square rostrum, were acknowledging greetings and cheers from the surging crowd, who were shouting at the tops of their voices, hoarse with excitement.

I was standing at the front of the crowd, directly opposite and only a few yards away from the platform on which Khrushchev and his hosts were acknowledging the greetings of the crowd. Without any premeditated intention I decided to dash across and hand to Khrushchev a letter I had with me, which originally I had planned to send to him through the Russian Embassy in East Berlin.

Without giving myself enough time to consider the unpleasant repercussions of such an unceremonious action, I resolved to go ahead. I was determined to clear my visa with Khrushchev in order to be allowed to roll my scooter on to Soviet territory. Considering my discouraging experiences of blunt refusals for a visa by the Soviet consulates in Washington, London, Bonn, Paris and Brussels, where in each case I was told I could not be issued with a visa to travel by road on a scooter to Moscow, I had more reason to seek the visa personally from Khrushchev, who I thought was the only man capable of helping me. His words would be final both for me and for any Russian embassy.

Soon enough, I found myself groping and fighting my way through well-knit police cordons in order to reach Khrushchev. Before the police had time to get wise to what was happening after I broke through their ranks, I reached for my hat, which I had dropped, and in which was hidden the letter I meant to hand over to Khrushchev. Shots fired by trigger-happy bodyguards rang out around me. Although one policeman managed to kick and make me stumble, I managed to scramble up in time to come face to face with Khrushchev.

In the sudden hush that descended I could see clearly that Khrushchev was afraid of me, his deputies crowding nervously around him. The unexpected and tense incident created a temporary disorder. Khrushchev was aghast, in a state of great apprehension. I watched him duck and take

protective cover behind his entourage, while Mikoyan stood there confidently. No doubt Khrushchev thought that I was a hired assassin who was out gunning for him. He was taking no chances.

I quickly smiled to assure him that I wasn't as ruthless as I might have looked, dressed in my Nigerian agbada. Khrushchev must have realized soon enough that I was not the assassin I was immediately taken to be because as I reached him he smiled his relief and reached out his hand to shake mine.

I had met him. I had achieved what I set out to do. And two days later Khrushchev gave me my visa for a month's visit to Russia.

After I received the visa personally from Khrushchev at the Russian Ambassador's residence I was under the impression that the last chapter to the whole unpleasant episode had been written. I was wrong, as the worst was still to come three days later. I thought that the East German authorities were aware that I had been cleared of all suspicion and issued with a visa to travel to Moscow. However, on my way out from Berlin, as I was making for the German-Polish border, I was apprehended and, with my scooter, dumped into a waiting military truck loaded with more than twenty-five soldiers. The arrest took place in the heart of East Berlin.

I was taken to the Central Intelligence Station before the Chief of Security Service and five other uniformed senior officers. They sent me to a dank, dark cell, unventilated and clammy. Here in this eight foot by three foot cell I spent five days. There was no bed.

Instead they gave me a tattered blanket. A small wash- basin and a cup completed the cell's equipment.

There was no window, and here I waited while tension built up inside me and fear took hold of my heart. Nothing happened for twenty-seven hours. Then, in the middle of the night, I woke to find a grim, hard- faced, bald-headed man in colonel's uniform leaning over me. I sprang up, staring. The man remained unsmiling. Then he read out from a sheet of paper the most preposterous charges I had ever been confronted with.

'Mr. Ajala,' said the man, 'you are brought here under arrest on the following charges, which you must carefully follow, as you are to be tried. You are charged with:

1. breaking through the police cordon in an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate our visiting guest Mr. Khrushchev;

2. resisting arrest by the People's Police and engaging in fist-fights in an attempt to escape;

3. serving as an American espionage agent in East Berlin.'

I lay there, dumbfounded. The man was mad. He left me to my thoughts and I fell back on my blanket. Sleep was gone, and in its place was cold, numbing fear. The next day the first of the interrogation sessions began.

Through it all one vein of action kept running through my exhausted replies. I would not budge from my original statement. I was granted a five-hour rest. As they filed out of the room, one of the men turned to me and said:

'You'd better be ready to confess by the time we return.'

Confess? To what? And if I did not confess what then?

Two slices of bread and some tea broke my hunger of three days. As I ate I thought: 'How will I get out of this? Why won't they let me get in touch with my embassy, or send a telegram to my family in Nigeria?'

The fifth day of my detention dawned. The way it began I expected to face my end, to stand against some unfriendly wall and face a bank of rifles, or feel my neck being stretched by a noose. I was literally waiting for death when the door opened and in bustled three officers. They wanted me to sign a document confessing that I was a spy and that I had, in fact, attempted to bump off Khrushchev. They told me I would be released if I did so. I refused: it would have amounted to signing my death warrant. They glanced at one another and filed out of the cell, leaving me in a worse state of mind than before.

That evening the three men returned. I expected to be led away now to my death. Then I noticed three Russians in civilian clothes. To my amazement I saw that one of them was offering me a cigarette. It was my first in five days. Then the man spoke in fluent English, which had a touch of the American drawl in it:

'I am here on the instructions of Prime Minister Khrushchev who has just come to know of your detention,' he said. 'You are to be released immediately.'

One of the German officers said:

'Before you go will you sign a statement saying that during your voluntary detention here you have been well fed, engaged in friendly discussions and have been comfortable? You must bear in mind that we German people are friends of Africans.'

Voluntary detention! Well fed! Friendly discussions and a comfortable bed! I signed—I'd have signed anything to get out of that lousy cell so long as it would not result in my death!

That evening I was escorted to the Polish- German frontier at Frankfurt. There was one more ordeal. Before I set foot on Polish soil a German immigration officer and a woman Customs officer stripped me completely naked for Customs examination. It is not an experience I care to dwell on. Let

me just say I shall never forget it.

It remains to be seen whether in reality Khrushchev stands for world peace and general disarmament as he often claims. That he wants peace seems true when we look into the ideological differences between the aggressive policy of Red China and the more liberal Russian policy, reportedly based on 'peaceful co-existence'.

Not that alone. At the American threat of an all- out invasion of Cuba, Khrushchev swiftly adhered to the demand of America to withdraw his destructive weapons and missiles from Cuban soil, next door to the United States. In order to avert a third world war which could have caused a catastrophic end to mankind, Khrushchev acceded to President Kennedy's demand, despite the widely known fact that American military bases, with dangerous weapons, encircle the Soviet Union in countries of Asia and Europe which are friendly to America.

As for general disarmament, the long years of haggling in Geneva over this touchy issue show that neither Russia nor America have any intention of carrying out general disarmament, as they both repeatedly claim.

I for one, without meaning to underestimate or disparage Khrushchev, entertain a definite impression of him, an impression formed both at the time I met him in 1957 at East Berlin and again in August 1962 when I was able to

interview him in Moscow's Kremlin.

I see Khrushchev, with all his virtues of leadership and oratory, as a braggart, an exhibitionist, a bully of the first water and an extrovert whose words one must evaluate thoroughly before taking them seriously at their face value.

At the same time he commands a charming and pleasing disposition. While he is friendly and full of vitality, has persuasive power of speech and a jovial personality, he lacks the personal magnetism which was one of Stalin's outstanding assets.

PART THREE

IRAN

6 Modern Ancient Iran (Persia)

IN THE middle of 1960, after nine days of hectic travel on the rugged road from Istanbul to Teheran, I hit the Turkish Persian frontier village of Maku, from where I could also perceive, at a distance, the Russian city of Baku on the Caspian Sea.

The imposing and snow-capped summit of Mount Ararat can be seen from any point within a radius of more than seventy-five miles. As I came closer, the giant mountain appeared to exercise a dominating and commanding influence over the people and the villages in the quiet, remote and solemnly peaceful environs of the thickly forested border.

Unlike the highway from Istanbul to the Turkish-Iranian frontier, the 950 miles of road from Maku, through the ancient and backward city of Tabriz and across to Teheran, was bumpy, dusty, untarred and covered with sharp stones. I remember that quite a number of times I had to struggle and plough my way through the unpaved and rugged road in order to get even a vague idea of my direction. To trust in the international road map I had with me for guidance was useless.

For a brief ecstatic moment, on my arrival in Teheran, the capital of Iran, I thought I was stepping effortlessly into antiquity, perhaps into the era of Genghis Khan.

In the outskirts of Teheran I could smell the detestable odour of dirt and filth. The sight of small shops and dilapidated houses made out of pise and protected by leaky tin roofs, was common. Dusty streets and lanes, black pools of stagnant water and ponds, where unclothed children and half-clad women bathed themselves, were to be seen everywhere.

In down-town Teheran, however, my eyes were filled with the sight of modern American goods, from television sets to colourful dresses, and beautifully styled balconies encircling skyscrapers and apartment buildings. While Teheran is thriving and obviously having a face-lift, I could find no progress in Tabriz, the second largest city in Iran. There is no electricity, and the people are still dependent on well-water for drinking.

Everywhere in Teheran one sees interesting Western-style boulevards, crowded shopping centres and oriental bazaars, office buildings and well-designed palaces and mosques, as well as black-marketeers and gaily dressed women with fragile features, styling the latest in Parisian fashions and hair-dos.

Despite its slow but sure progress, Iran is ridden with abject poverty, and the slums of Teheran, a city inhabited by more

than 1,000,000 people, can compete with those of Calcutta. Graft and corruption are prevalent at high government levels.

It was inevitable that my eyes should not escape the open drains, the raggedly clothed, sad, thin and dirty children, as well as the sight of adults drinking from and washing their clothes and feet in the same gutter- water passing through the main street of Teheran.

Iran is a country of strangeness and glamour, where beauty and grinding poverty are seen at their extremes. In no other city I had visited in Asia was the cost of living so terrifyingly high as in Teheran—not even in Tokyo.

While responsible posts in the government were either held or controlled by rich landowners and influential people of 'royal connection', who had no experience of civil service administration whatsoever, obvious election rigging by the party controlling the government was open knowledge.

For fear of arrest on trumped-up political charges, well qualified Iranian students who had studied and graduated abroad, in such countries as the United States, Germany and France, would refuse to return to Iran. They were afraid of being subjected to humiliation and of being deprived of their passports, which were often taken from them on their re-entry into Iran. Most of them were openly critical of the Shah's government, which they maintained was based on absolute monarchy, ruthlessness and lack of human

consideration for and welfare of the ordinary man-in-the-street.

From what I saw during the three months I spent in Iran, the Shah seemed to be at the lowest ebb of popularity among his people. His wife, Queen Farah, I noticed, was very much loved and showered with praise by Iranians of every age, class and occupation. The Shah's recent policy of dishing-out part of his land, money and personal property to the poorer classes is attributed to the advice and influence of Queen Farah.

Later, when I was granted an audience with the Shah at one of his four beautiful palaces in Teheran, I found it difficult to believe that he is ruthless, inhumane and that he wields absolute power, as I was so often made to understand. He appeared to me as simple and kindly in his thoughts, words and actions. I gathered the impression that he had little knowledge of what was happening in his government, which he left in the hands of mercenary officials, landowners and corrupt politicians.

One vital question which often baffled me and I kept asking myself in Iran, especially when I looked at the horrifying condition of the roads, the poverty of the people, mass unemployment and sky-rocketing prices of everyday necessities of life, was this: What was happening to the millions of dollars in foreign aid given to Iran every year by the United States? Where did all the massive oil revenues, accrued from southern Iran's oil city of Abadan, find their

way? It is a known fact that one of the major sources of oil production in the Middle East is Iran.

It does not take much enquiry for any interested tourist to discover that most of the funds go into the private bank accounts of certain politicians and government administrators, and, of course, into payment for the dazzling imported furniture of the Shah's palaces. The country's military men, from the rank of general to that of the ordinary recruit, are known to pocket a large chunk of the money.

The deliberate misappropriation of public funds, coupled with the rigging of elections, was reported to be the root of sporadic riots and strikes engineered and carried out by students and government workers in Teheran and other parts of Iran. This at times resulted in the cold-blooded killing of some of the rioters by the army.

There is one incident which I enjoy recalling. It was to do with one of the Shah's strange monthly press conferences, which I attended at his grandly furnished palace in the heart of Teheran. I did not appreciate the fact that I would be the odd man out until I was made to realize it by stern-faced, revolver-slinging military guards of the Shah. There were almost ninety local and foreign journalists, all issued with gold-rimmed invitation cards to the conference. I went along on an invitation issued by the Minister of Information, approved and countersigned by the Minister of Court, Mr. Alah.

Except for me, all the other reporters were impeccably dressed in hired white ties and tail-coats, including even the press photographers. It was the order of the day. It said so on the invitation I received. As I hadn't the outfit and could not afford to hire one, I went along to the palace dressed in a fading suede leather jacket and blue jeans, with my Nikon camera slung over my shoulder. When I arrived at the main iron gate I was refused entry into the palace grounds. 'I am sorry, you are not properly dressed for the conference,' an officer in captain's uniform told me. I fished out my invitation card and flashed it in front of him. He was not impressed.

Soon a colonel came along and the captain related my case to him. After he had failed to dissuade me from attending the meeting he asked me to allow him to have a word with the Minister of Court. Ten minutes later he came back. 'Mr. Alah says you can attend the conference, but you must sit in the last row, where you will not be seen by the Shah. Also,' he added, 'in that beatnik dress of yours you cannot be allowed to get close and take any photographs of the Shah. I must take your camera, and on your way out you can have it back.' I reluctantly left my camera at the gate and was led away to the conference by two soldiers, one on either side of me.

It was a formal and conventional press conference, the first of its kind I had attended in all my years of journalism. The main topic of the conference was the rigging of elections and the dismissal of the government of the day accused of

election corruptions. Throughout the conference, which lasted more than an hour, the Shah, seated on a Victorian chair, plated with gold, and surrounded by nervous-looking officials, including the Ministers of Information and Court, did the talking; asking and answering all the questions. No one was allowed to question him. The atmosphere of the gathering was that of a funeral service in honour of a close relative. I was aghast and found it difficult to comprehend the whole show. Once, when I tried to ask the Shah a question, I was immediately silenced by two of the hefty guards breathing over my shoulder. I was threatened with forcible ejection 'if you try anything funny again'.

Traditionally a Moslem country, with a population of 23,000,000, Iran's vast area covers roughly 636,000 square miles. It is the size of Germany, France, Spain and Italy combined. Though untapped, its land offers a variety of natural resources and climates, as well as opportunity for agricultural development. The country stretches across deserts and mountains from Iraq to the Persian Gulf, from Turkey along the Soviet border, from Afghanistan to Pakistan, and from the Caspian Sea to the Gulf of Oman.

Iran has one of the world's oldest surviving monarchies, with the dazzling spectacle of modern and ancient architecture in its palaces and mosques. Most of the people are devotedly religious and are strong believers in the principles of Islam. Their culture is very rich, especially in the colourful variety of women's national dress, mostly to be seen in remote villages and in the countryside.

My most vivid memories of Iran are of four places I visited: the Gulistan Palace in Teheran, converted into a glorious and priceless museum; the ancient city of Isfahan, once the capital of Persia when Shah Abbas the Great moved his court from the warrior city of Qazvin; Shiraz, known as the City of Poets, and, of course, the ruined city of Persepolis.

Gulistan Palace, with its valuable contents, affords a breath taking sight and is a must for any tourist. It is more than just a museum of unique value. It is the 'Fort Knox' of Iran. The spacious interior glitters with priceless ornaments of gold, silver and diamond.

Isfahan is a city of beautiful flowers, dome- roofed mosques, attractive promenades styled for traffic and flanked on each side by hand-built cement ponds and open water-supply ditches for public use. The beauty of roses and other flowers can be seen mostly in the mosques, particularly in that of the Shah. Then there is Madrasah, where I saw arrangements of Koranic letters and words prominently and delicately engraved on its walls.

Isfahan was built to endure the changes of time. Today the Iranians of Isfahan are known to be exceptionally dedicated craftsmen, with characteristic fragile and artistic hands. They are experts at all crafts, from that of coppersmith to wood-carver.

Shiraz, famous as the 'City of Poets', is more than just that. It is also a city of centuries of civilization. Each year Shiraz

attracts thousands of local and foreign tourists. As she does with her kings and queens, Iran shows pride in her notable poets and writers. For example, the tombs of the famous Sa'di and Hafiz are regarded as historical landmarks in Shiraz today. Commonly seen in Shiraz, as in Isfahan, are beds of sumptuously beautiful flowers, which I could not help but admire despite my usual complete lack of interest.

My impression of Iran would be incomplete without a brief reference to the birthplace of Persian monarchy—Persepolis. It is the arena of history and legend. It is often said that in Persepolis twenty-five centuries ago Darius I and his son Xerxes built the first magnificent capital of Persia. When Alexander the Great conquered the city in 330 B.C. his troops burned its palace to ashes from rage and jealousy. On the walls of Apadana, the royal guest hall, one can see carvings depicting graceful Assyrians and Afghans offering tributes to the glory of Xerxes in the days of Darius. Giant columns of Lebanon cedar, which supported Apadana, can still be seen standing today despite the centuries of their existence. All over Persepolis one can see the ancient stones of ruins created by Alexander the Great and his soldiers after the palace was captured and destroyed beyond recognition.

Iran is living very much in the past, and is one of the very few countries which is full of history and ancient culture, the memory of which is being preserved in priceless treasures and antiques.

7 An Audience with the Shah of Iran

FOR anyone, from the head of state of another country down to an ordinary man, to obtain a private audience with the Shah of Iran takes a lot of doing, under a cloud of suspicion and fear, and attended by maximum security measures.

In a way I could appreciate the reason for this. Near successful attempts on his life have been made a few times, the most famous of which was in 1949, when an assassin's bullets hit his face and shoulders. The bullets nearly crippled him, and only the medical ingenuity of surgeons and specialists from different parts of the world saved him.

Among the many statesmen I have met, His Majesty Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlevi, otherwise called Shahanshah (King of Kings) by his subjects, is about the most securely protected and guarded—by specially hand-picked, grim-faced and heavily armed military officers.

In order to run his dynasty to his full satisfaction, the Shah makes sure that political parties, the whole net of government machinery, and heavy industry such as oil production, are directly under his control. He leaves the

internal arrangements of these organizations to those in charge, but retains absolute authority to alter or disband them when he finds reason to do so.
I was desperate to meet the Shah, and I realized it would involve risking my neck if I did not comply with rigid protocol in which I did not have much confidence. As it turned out, I had several ghastly experiences at the hands of his tough soldiers and gun- toting bodyguards, who beat me up a number of times and smashed my cameras, in the process of my unsuccessful efforts to break through cordons in order to reach the Shah.

Naturally enough, they were ruthless and inconsiderate. I was once crudely guaranteed 'a bullet in your groin' by a captain if I did not refrain from my 'tricks', as he put it. I heeded his warning. The cameras were later replaced by the Chief of Police, Colonel Ansari, when I complained to him.

Finally, I decided to conform and enlist the help of the protocol in which I had no confidence. After six weeks of running about from one government ministry to another, my efforts finally paid off. I had gone through the whole network of protocol and formalities involving the Ministries of Foreign Affairs,

Information and the Interior, Police and Security Departments and finally the Ministries of Defence and of the Imperial Court.

Without the kindly guidance of the Shah's Minister of Court, Mr. Alah, a short, quietly shrewd and conservative man, my chances of ever being received by the Shah would have been nil. He was the Shah's close and trusted adviser and confidant.

One fine morning, barely a week before I had decided to leave Teheran for Karachi in Pakistan, the telephone in my room rang. It was about seven o'clock. I picked up the receiver and the voice on the line quietly asked, 'Are you Mr. Ajala from Nigeria?'

After I had confirmed this, it went on to say: 'Well, this is Mr. Alah. I have arranged your audience with the Shah for tomorrow at the Sadabah Palace in Shemron. You are to report at the main gate at noon. His Majesty will see you at noon.' It was a relief to know that finally I was getting somewhere.

The following day I arrived at the main entrance of the palace at 11 a.m., one hour earlier than the appointed time. I went earlier because I suspected from my earlier experience of the press conference that I might be searched and thoroughly frisked for any concealed weapon. As soon as I reached the palace gate I volunteered myself to the guards to be searched, before they could ask my permission, which I would have had to give whether I chose to or not.

Stripped to the waist, I was minutely searched, the pockets of my jacket and trousers were scrutinized, while my camera

was pulled apart to make sure there was no hidden weapon of miniature size which might have been secretly attached.

After the strip-tease show the short walk from the guardroom to the main building of the palace, situated on the outskirts of Teheran, at the foot of Shimran Mountain, began. I was accompanied by four armed soldiers. At the marble staircase leading into the Shah's guest-room I was met by the Security Chief. Colonel Nasiri is a tall, fine-featured and cool mannered man. He took me into a neat and well- furnished room, where he left me. A white-uniformed man in white tennis shoes entered and offered me a glass of tea and a choice of assorted cakes.

Ten minutes later the towering figure of Colonel Nasiri appeared at the door of the room. 'Mr. Ajala, kindly come along with me now. His Majesty will receive you in the garden.' He spoke in a low, cultured voice.

As I nervously followed behind, through the winding corridors of the palace into the garden, my eyes were promptly attracted by colourful roses and other flowers, and by white-painted stones which lined both sides of the marble pathway.

To my left was a neatly trimmed tennis court, while to my right I saw a piano-shaped swimming pool. I noticed a beautiful woman dressed in an elegant pink sack-dress, reading a book. She turned out to be Queen Farah, who was at that time expecting her first child. For a moment she

looked up from her book and flashed a warm smile. In the brief moment she looked at me I could see that she was full of charm and grace.
A few steps opposite Queen Farah I noticed the back of a well-dressed man slowly walking along with calculated pace. Abruptly the man turned round.

"Shahanshah,' solemnly intoned Colonel Nasiri, 'this is Mr. Ajala from Nigeria.'

He moved closer to me, shook my hand—I hardly felt his grip—and asked me if I minded strolling with him around the garden while we talked. He was impeccably dressed in a dark grey, striped suit, white shirt with a white-dotted black tie, and casual shoes. Walking along Whitehall in London, he could easily have been taken for an English Member of Parliament.

His manner was cool, reserved and simple. His heart-shaped face, looking too fragile for his wiry figure, was aflame with intelligence and alertness. The Shah speaks easily and casually in flawless English, and was not evasive in answering my questions.

Unlike most of the statesmen and leaders I have met, the Shah did not profess to know everything about Africa. While he was not talking particularly about politics, he was very keen to know about African nationalism and the social and educational advancement of the continent.

Regrettably and shamefully on my part, I could not answer most of the searching questions he posed:

'What is the average life-span among Africans ? Is it in the region of eighty years? What is the anthropological origin of Africans? Have there ever been traces of manuscripts, and, if so, what type of letters and methods of communication were used by Africans in the ancient days?'

Such unexpected questions revealed to me the hidden sharpness of the Shah. He was very interested in the welfare and progress of the newly independent African countries and expressed a desire to visit the African continent at a future date.

While he pointed out that he was glad at the independence of Nigeria, he was 'deeply disappointed' at the events going on in some parts of Africa, such as 'the Union of South Africa, where the relationship between the white and the African is like that of the master and the slave'. He added, 'Iran has been represented in this struggle a number of times in the United Nations by Dr. Abdou, who is serving on a number of U.N. committees to do with the welfare of humanity.'

Soon we walked towards the pool where his charming wife was seated. I was formally introduced to her. She looked rather shy, and invited her husband and me to enjoy a cup of tea and light refreshments. Seated between them, I could see a short distance away the snub-nosed rifles of the Shah's

uniformed bodyguards. The eyes of the soldiers and the protruding noses of their guns were constantly focussed on me. This much I suspected during the forty-five minutes I had spent with the Shah in the spacious and colourful garden.

After I had left him and he had again turned his back, walking in the direction of the Queen, five rifle- brandishing bodyguards swiftly encircled me. I was seen to the main gate.

After I left him I came to the happy conclusion that the Shah of Iran—King of Kings—like any other man is subject to joy and sorrow, success and failure. What endeared him to me was the fact that he did not attempt to hide this fact from me.

PART FOUR

MIDDLE EAST

8 *The Arab World*

TODAY, in practically all of these independent states, except for such places as India, Japan, Nigeria, Tanganyika, Cambodia, the Philippines and Israel, the institutional principles and practice of democracy have been wiped out.

In place of the legacy of democracy left by the Western powers, which could easily have been adopted and used to advantage by these newly independent countries, we have military junta, absolute monarchy, dictatorship, corrupt government and power-drunk politicians and leaders running the affairs of the state in the name of independence. This phenomenon, worse than the worst type of colonialism, and an extreme instrument of suppression, was what I found prevalent in nearly every independent Asian and African country I toured.

I came to the bitter conclusion that our belief in political democracy following naturally in such states on the withdrawal of monarchical rule or colonial administration is baseless. Terrorism, rivalry, greed for power, revolution and counter-revolution automatically follow in hot pursuit.

From this background emerges the simmering Middle East —the Arab world—continuously ridden by violent nationalism, *coup d'états* and the sporadic exchange of bullets between Arabs and Israeli Jews.

It is certainly no geographical accident that military and authoritarian regimes have sprung thickest in this part of the world. For countless centuries, in this area, Society has lived by the art of violence and the struggle for survival in a harsh environment. Desert tribes were accustomed to the rule of wealthy chieftains whose word was law. This has helped to bring about the competitive struggle for power, absolute monarchy, the brutal assassination of kings, princes and corrupt prime ministers, coupled, of course, with the birth of Israel in the region. All of these have major roles to play in the disturbing and unpredictable events of the area.

The 'Arab World', not just the Middle East, in a rough descriptive term extends from the Atlantic shores of northwest Africa (embodying Africa north of the Sahara) to the Red Sea; through Saudi Arabia to the Persian Gulf, and the whole eastern shore of the Mediterranean as far as the southeast border of Turkey. In area it embraces some 5,000,000 square miles—one- tenth of the earth's land surface. It is inhabited by more than 90,000,000 people, about one thirtieth of mankind. Virtually two-thirds of its area consists of desert.

In this account of the Arab world I shall confine myself to the Middle East, incorporating West Asia and Egypt.

For thirteen months, in 1959-60, I travelled the length and breadth of the Middle East in such political powder-keg places as Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Israel. Then the political conditions and life in general in the area were grim, touchy and much more unpredictable than in recent times. Street-gatherings of more than three persons in Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan were prohibited. Death to anyone resisting arrest by rifle-carrying soldiers for such ordinary misdemeanours as drunkenness and misbehaviour in the streets was instantaneous.

While I succeeded in having exclusive interviews with such Arab figures as the since- murdered Premier of Jordan, Hazan Majali, President Nasser and the executed Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kassem of Iraq, I was arrested, imprisoned and deported on three different occasions. Some of these happened in Egypt and Lebanon. In Israel's Jerusalem I was set upon and beaten by three drunken officials of the U.N. forces outside a night-club, and I had to be rescued by some Israeli youths from what would have been certain death.

My journey by scooter in the Middle East, which started and ended in Beirut, was a glorious and informative experience, and at the same time rugged and exciting. I saw as much of the strangeness and beauty of nature as I did of its ugliness and poverty.

Lebanon, situated along the Mediterranean, is a land of cedars and pines. Here is the pivot of East and West. In this little country of less than 2,000,000 people, adjoined by Israel, I found people of different religious faith, creed and origin living in brotherhood.

There are almost equal percentages of Christians and Moslems, and they speak French as fluently as Arabic.

I had travelled to Beirut with my scooter by boat from Cyprus, a few months after its civil war broke out, quickly suppressed by the threat of landing American paratroopers.

Beirut, the capital, is a bustling and razzle- dazzle city day or night. It is a trans-shipment centre for the movement of men, money and ideas. It is reputed to have the best port, aerodrome and largest banks in Asia, outside Japan.

In the streets, at any hour of the day, one's eyes are filled with the sight of people of different races and nationalities. Most of the visiting business men and women are elegantly dressed in such colourful garments as kimonos, saris, sarongs, agbadas and other Asian and African attires, mingled with the tweeds and conservatively cut coats and suits of the West.

I could not help ruminating over the pages of history I had read on Lebanon, which tell of the many peoples who came to occupy the land: Babylonians, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Crusaders,

Turks and Frenchmen. One can easily imagine that the diluted characteristics of all these races are ingrained into the average Lebanese.
The Lebanese, unlike his fellow Arab, is a hard- working, resourceful and business-conscious individual. He is obstinately proud of his place of birth. Nearly 80% of the people are literate.

After I had made a tour of Beirut and saw the sight of oil rich bearded traders sweeping into the city in their caravans of Cadillacs, I could not help but conclude that this is the Las Vegas of Asia and Europe put together. Beirut is a casino for loose women, gambling, all-night cocktails, night-clubs and strip- tease cabarets.

At the American University in Beirut, where I was staying in one of the neatly furnished dormitories, I met a young Lebanese student of engineering. Ismet Taymani, whose father lives in Ghana and who was born in Accra, insisted that I came to live with him and his mother at their house. I shared his room.

He was a Christian, fresh-faced, but, like all Arab youth, was an ardent admirer of Nasser.
He bore violent hatred towards Israel.

'Some day we shall kill all the Jews in Israel and help Palestinians to recover our land from the Zionists,' he declared.

'But why do you Arabs hate the Jews so much?' I wanted to know.

'Many foreigners misunderstand the Arabs,' he tersely remarked. 'We do not hate the Jews, they are human beings like you and me. We Arabs are not race- conscious. We only hate the Israeli Zionists, who, with the help of America and Britain, stole our land and drove our brothers away from Palestine. And we in turn shall destroy and drive them away from Arab soil. It will only take Arab unity and Allah to make this possible. Nasser will see to that, because he is our only hope and saviour.'

Our discussion on the Israel-Arab conflict started in the main dining-hall of the university after I had finished delivering a lecture on Africa at the invitation of their dean.

There was a handful of both male and female Arab students present. We were all seated around a large table, sipping coffee and tea.

Taymani's closest friend, one Zane, whose father is the professor of Arab and Asian history at the university, had some bitter ideas to contribute to the conversation.

'Israel is an illegitimate child. We know that she was fathered by Britain, mothered by America and is now being nursed to maturity with the help of the U.N. These powers have made difficult our efforts to recover it before now. The time will soon arrive.'

Miss Fatima Hassam, a third-year political student, pointed out that it was France and Britain who instigated and backed Israel to attack the Arabs during the ugly events of the Suez Canal crisis and the Sinai Desert clashes.

'Britain and France wanted to recover not only the Suez Canal but wanted very much to capture the whole of Arab soil for Israel.'

'How do you come to that conclusion?' I asked.

'Well, you know the imperialist tricks. They supplied bombs, machine-guns, fighter-planes and all kinds of weapons to Israel to attack us. Israel was being used to serve the interests of others. Nasser knew it, and that was why he almost asked Russia to back him. We will destroy the Zionists in Israel and throw them into the sea.'

I prodded them further.

'I am an African, my friends, and I am not for or against the Jews, but there is one question I would like to put to you.' Their faces were alive with interest.

'Let us take it that Israel, which you all insist is an illegitimate country, is in fact a country.' (They disagreed with me in unison, and one of them stated that it should be called 'Israeli-held Palestine'.) 'All right, let us call it Israeli-held Palestine. What I would like to know is if one of you girls here bore an illegitimate child (please excuse the

suggestion) are you going to destroy the baby or allow it to live?'
Fatima answered: 'An unwanted illegitimate baby can be adopted or placed in an orphanage. That is different, it is a human being. But Israel is the opposite of that and it must be destroyed.'

I disagreed.

'Miss, don't you think, then, that in order to avoid Israel being killed, if she is like an illegitimate child as one of you said, that is why America, Britain and the United Nations have adopted her?'

Despite the fact that they disagreed with my remarks, they remained friendly. That evening we all made a night of it in Zane's house, and later we went to see a movie in the city.

After two weeks in Beirut I decided to travel through the forbidden Arab border territories of Jordan, Syria and Lebanon in order to reach Israel.

I began from Beirut the arduous journey by scooter to Israel on an unusually hot and sticky day. I knew I was asking for trouble from the Arabs, because once I went into Israel I could not return to any of the Arab states without being arrested. They did find out, and, as expected, I was jailed.

The distance to Jerusalem in Israel from Beirut, via Damascus in Syria, and Amman in Jordan, is about 550 miles.

On my way to Damascus I looked in to see a few interesting and historical places in other parts of Lebanon. Most of them were not actually on my way, except for the ruins of Baalbek on the Lebanese-Syrian border.

I was fascinated by the well-known Cave of Jeita, which extends along the northern coast for about a mile, and can be explored by boat. On the brilliantly floodlit waters of the cave I was impressed by the fantastic architecture of stalactites and stalagmites.

I went further north from Beirut to admire Nahr Ibrahim—the River of Adonis. In the centre of Lebanon itself there is the Cave of Afka, which is the source of the River of Adonis, and Mount Faraya, where the Nabeh el Laban, or 'River of Milk', flows beneath a gigantic natural bridge.

9 *Visit to an Arab Brothel*

DAMASCUS, the capital of Syria where I spent a month before proceeding to Israel, was a quieter and more orderly city than Beirut, though with its own vices. The people were just as interesting, charming and friendly as I was to find all over the Arab states.

Syria could be called the birthplace of Arab nationalism and unity which today is still something of an un-implemented scheme.

It was in Syria, for the first time, that I came to know organized prostitution, complete with brothels and pimps, as an affair of the government. The same system, I was later to discover, exists in other countries, particularly Turkey, Pakistan, Korea and Formosa.

In some of these places only small shanties and hovels are provided in a walled area for all grades of prostitutes, where customers come to patronize them. However, in Syria the government's approach is more capably organized.

In Damascus, less than seven ninutes' walk from the presidential palace, and on the main road leading out of the city towards Beirut, I came to a massive, triangular-shaped yellow building.

I walked up the pathway leading into the yard of the yellow building and came face to face with two blue-uniformed police officers carrying rifles. As with all men entering the building, the two sentries, without saying a word, inquisitively eyed and sized me up for age. I was now inside the compound, facing the four- storey building.

As I trekked through the main door of the building proper, on each side of me were two little guard rooms crowded with uniformed police. I was asked to produce my identity card. It was left to me to prove that I was over eighteen years old, and had enough money (about one U.S. dollar) for whatever transaction I wished to make with one of the females inside. I deposited at the door, for safety, my valuables, including a wrist-watch, ring and wallet.

I was issued with a pass and told that I could stay inside the building for not more than two hours. Special arrangements must be made with the police if I wished to stay longer than the usual time. By now I had completed the initial formalities involving the government, except for an examination by a doctor, who was waiting for me right after I had been cleared by the police. I was then passed by the doctor as medically fit to 'talk' to any of the 300 women in the 'big house'.

I wandered through the long corridors and small hallways. As I walked along, rubbing shoulders with other men, I peeped curiously through doors and windows here and there to evaluate the beautiful, ugly, vicious, glamorous, terrifying, ageing or fresh faces of young and middle-aged women.

An ageing woman, around fifty years, and a bulky, red hatted man in his early forties pleaded with me to pick any one of their 'beautiful, glamorous women who have the figure of Brigitte Bardot, the face of Marilyn Monroe and the legs of Marlene Dietrich'. I agreed to select one. Most of the women were Arabs clad in European dress.

During an exchange of words the girl I picked said that by origin she was French and by birth was Arab. She was tall, beautiful, long-legged and blonde, and could have been seventeen years old. She told me that her parents were French but that she could not speak a word of French now. She was brought up an Arab and lived all her childhood in Damascus until her parents were killed in a revolution. She went on to tell me with a sad expression that she was having difficulty living a respectable life, as she was not an Arab by race. All her efforts to get a passport and leave the country for Australia, where she could start a new life, were futile.

As I talked to her, seated on a sumptuous bed in her beautifully furnished room, with magazine photographs of movie stars pinned to the wall, the aged woman, one of many employed by the government to run the place, walked

into the room and in an embarrassed manner requested me to 'please pay for her body'. Accordingly I fished out the equivalent of one American dollar in Syrian money and handed it to her.

The girl had told me that she would receive half the payment, while the government would take the rest.

The old woman waddled out of the room. I had seen enough and was repelled by the whole set-up. I talked with the unfortunate girl for a few minutes longer, wished her a better future and returned to the guards at the main gate to collect my valuables before making my way out of the compound.
In these government-run brothels, I was told, if you are a soldier or a police officer you need not pay. You just walk into any of the rooms and choose any woman you fancy.

In the government-run brothels in Damascus, as in Aleppo and other parts of Syria and Turkey, soldiers are given priority over civilians. Next door to the hospital-like building of prostitutes in Damascus were built the military barracks. The government arranges separate hours for visits to the 'yellow house' by civilians and soldiers.

What amazed me about this set-up was the fact that this is a Moslem country. The Koran and Mohammed frown on such immoral practices.

I found it most difficult to believe that devotedly good Moslems could be found in the Arab world, compared with, say, the Moslems in Africa and other parts of Asia such as Pakistan and Indonesia.

Devotion to the cardinal principles and the strict practice of Mohammedanism in such places as Pakistan, Iran, Northern Nigeria, Cambodia, Sudan and Tashkent far outshines that of all the Arab countries put together. Yet the root of Islam can be found in the Arab states.

10 *Nasser and Arab Nationalism*

ARRIVING in Syria, I found that the name Nasser was an obsession and had by then become a household word. Nasser was regarded as the champion and architect of Arab positive nationalism. At this time the marriage of convenience between Syria and Egypt had not so long been performed. Its outcome was the United Arab Republic. This partnership was later dissolved after one of those lightning Arab revolts and military *coup d'états* in 1962.

It was known at the time of the union that Egypt was, strangely enough, not its originator, as many outsiders believed. Nasser was, admittedly, preaching Arab unity, as he is doing today, but only in an attempt to rally his fellow Arabs around him in an effort to undertake a concerted and decisive showdown against Israel.

The idea, then, of Syria merging with Egypt was put forward by the Syrian military officers, headed by Colonel Abdul Hamid el Sarraj. Later, Sarraj escaped to Egypt, after a new anti-Nasser military revolution toppled the union and formed a government in Syria.

Two factors, economic and political, in Syria before 1958 drove her to seek integration with Egypt. It is on record that no previous Syrian government had ever accepted any form of foreign aid, either from America or Russia. At that time the World Bank loan conditions were too strict. The economy of the country was in chaos and on the verge of hitting rock bottom. The known Syrian communists and the wealthy Lebanese in the country were greedily taking advantage of the situation.

The violently pro-communist elements, led by Khaled elAzam, a wealthy landowner and the Defence Minister in the then government, sought and signed a Syrian-Soviet aid agreement in Moscow. The military officers and political leaders of Baath, critical of Azam's Cabinet, resolved on decisive action. They flew to Cairo and pleaded with Nassertoagree to the immediate union of the two countries, as their land was heading for 'certain disaster, both politically and economically. It is becoming a breeding place for communists.' This was in January 1958.

Nasser's reaction to the idea from the very time he was approached, as he later told me when I went to see him, 'was lukewarm'. He said, 'I might be labelled by the colonialists, Britain, Saudi Arabia, America and Jordan, as an ambitious expansionist and dictator.'

However, after certain drastic conditions had been imposed by Nasser for the integration, involving, firstly, the dissolution of all political parties in Syria and, secondly, his

advice to them to return home and 'prepare the pathway', the United Arab Republic was launched in February 1958 amidst great enthusiasm by the Arabs of both countries.

In this process of Syrian-Egyptian union a strange development involving King Saud of Saudi Arabia occurred. There was a terse public declaration by the U.A.R. Government that King Saud had plotted to have Nasser assassinated in order to prevent the formation of the federal government.

Substantiated evidence and thorough investigation by Western reporters proved that in fact the accusation contained some truth. Colonel Abdul el Sarraj, then Minister of Interior, and a close confidant of Nasser, publicly stated that he was offered £2,000,000 sterling, half of which was in fact paid in advance. When he had delivered the head of Nasser to King Saud the other million would be paid.

Sarraj, according to him, conveniently 'played the King along, until finally I broke the plot to Gamal Nasser'.

The unravelling of the plot increased the prestige of Nasser all over the Arab world, while King Saud was strongly condemned and discredited. His prestige dwindled to its lowest ebb.

Nasser's fame and popularity in Syria when I arrived in Damascus was at its height. He was the idol of everyone I

talked with. His photograph, in different sizes and shapes, was prominently displayed in expensive, silver- or gold-rimmed frames in shops, houses, street corners, toilets, on buses, government offices and every imaginable place.

'Next to Allah on our soil is Nasser,' was the saying I commonly heard in every place I managed to start a conversation on the future of Arabism.

At the beginning of integration the Syrians one met, particularly farmers in the countryside, seemed terribly depressed, mainly because it had not rained in their country for five successive years. Crops were bad—it was a story of poverty and dissatisfaction.

From the time Nasser took over the administration of the country one could see that it was still in a state of failure and hopelessness. Agriculture was at a standstill. The streets were crowded with raggedly clothed beggars. Thievery and highway robbery were reported prevalent everywhere. Food was getting scarce, while black-marketeers were making a day of it. Hungry peasants and farmers were streaming into the capital in battalions, making their way to Nasser's residence.

He soon set to work and distributed land and farms, giving out deeds and funds to farmers and poverty-stricken peasants. He stamped out corruption, communist elements and rich landowners, most of whom had ruthlessly been

using the labour of hard- working people without giving anything in return.

'If we had not been taken over by Egypt no doubt Iraq or British-backed Jordan would have invaded us,' said an imam (a Moslem religious head) in Damascus.

Nasser introduced drastic and revolutionary reforms from which the poor classes benefited more than anyone. There was soon enough to eat, and agriculture and economy was rapidly picking up. These reforms on the part of Nasser quickly increased his fame and popularity. He was becoming something of an institution to these extremely nationalistic Arabs.

Whenever he spoke, either in person or over the radio, there was tense silence, followed suddenly by a deafening ovation and great excitement as he finished his oratorical speech. Wherever he went in public places he was carried shoulder high, and in the process his tie, jacket and shirt were often torn off him by a fanatically excited mob of enthusiasts.

In the era of the Syrian-Egyptian association Syria, with the help of Egypt, appeared to have surmounted her economic troubles. She distinguished herself in administrative efficiency, land reform, agricultural production and general economic success. This progress was lacking before integration with Egypt. No one doubted this, despite the fact that Syria has always been recognized as part of the Fertile Crescent.

It would be wrong, of course, to dismiss Arab nationalism, based in my opinion on sentiment, as purely a propaganda myth. It does exist in principle. Plots and rivalries among its supporters make its recognition difficult by the Western world.

It is primarily based on a common language, a common religion and an ancient culture, the root of which is not even known today.

'What brought about the birth of Arab nationalism, unity and brotherhood,' as dapper and quietly spoken el Sarraj told me in his office in Damascus, 'was foreign colonialism, capitalist exploitation of our natural wealth and particularly the creation of Israel as an imperialist outpost on our soil by the colonialists. Our unity is here to stay, and will continue to guide our destiny.'

Egypt, geographically recognized as a part of Africa, has strictly identified herself with the Middle East, and stands as the strongest advocate of Arab nationalism and unity. This was clearly enunciated in Nasser's 'Philosophy of the Revolution'.

There are other Arab leaders suspicious of Nasser's sincerity. One such is King Hussein of Jordan, as was also his Prime Minister, Hazal Majali, who told me in Amman before he was assassinated:

'Nasser's ambition is limitless. He must be curbed before he ruins the Arab society. King Hussein and everyone in Jordan believe in Arab unity and nationalism, but Nasser's grand policy is, any way you look at it, another kind of imperialism—the rule and domination of one state by another in the name of Arab unity. Arab unity cannot be brought on us by force, gangsterism, treachery, dictatorship or any form of compulsion.'

He went on to add that Jordan was fully prepared to join hands with all the Arab states in an effort 'to throw out the Jews from Palestine and help our brothers to get back into their homes, when the time comes'.

I gathered from these contrasting views, which I heard wherever I stopped in my dash from one Arab country to another, that political fears and violent nationalism are the breath and impulse of Arabism.

However, in spite of all these political differences, it remains a fact which cannot be ignored that sooner or later the day for permanent Arab unity and solidarity will dawn. More recent events involving Colonel Aref, the new president of Iraq, who is known to be violently pro-Nasser, and the Yemen revolution are fulfilling this prediction.

All this points to the disturbing fact that Israel, if she does not keep constantly on her toes, will face a much greater threat than she has known in the past.

It is common knowledge to any authority on the Middle East that one of the few vital reasons for the Arab failure effectively to invade Israel all these past years has been lack of unified effort, petty jealousies and the individual struggle for power within the Arabs' own camp. This to a certain extent remains the same today. But it does appear time for Israel, and the West for that matter, to steel themselves and realize that they cannot benefit much longer from these advantages. It will amount to suicide to imagine otherwise.

Today Arab militant nationalism more than anything else is based on two factors: the earlier division of the feudal kingdoms by Britain and France for gainful exploitation, and the inception of the State of Israel, often suspiciously scorned and eyed as a colonialist outpost. In addition, the aim of Arab nationalism is for a uniform and revolutionized standard of living, based on guided socialism and the eradication of monarchical power. Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen and Syria appear to be rapidly heading in this direction, even if separately. At the time of writing, the rebirth of the United Arab Republic has just been initiated. It now embodies Iraq, Syria and Egypt. What political manoeuvres will now follow in the simmering and unpredictable Middle East is anybody's guess. Here violence and *coup d'états* are almost everyday occurrences.

The penetrating power of Nasser's Cairo Radio, whose net spreads all over West Asia, North and Central Africa, will largely be credited with the success or failure of Arab positive nationalism. To his millions of excitable listeners

Nasser claims to defend and speak for the 'have-nots' and the oppressed under the 'ruthless stooges of colonial powers, mercenary kings and military dictators'.

What must also be borne in mind is the growth and influence of a forceful young Arab generation which is now entering the limelight of Arab nationalism. A few of them I met in Beirut, Cairo, Amman, Baghdad and Damascus. They are known as 'Nasser's boys'. Most of them are young university students and government employees: well educated, politically conscious, terribly critical of Israel and dedicated to the course of Arab unity. On the average they are cool-headed, with sharp, logical minds. They are certainly not fanatics, or easily prone to violence.

11 *Assassination Attempt in Jordan*

MY JOURNEY to Israel by road continued from Damascus to Amman and Jericho, in the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan.

Three days after I arrived in Amman, capital of Jordan, I went by appointment to the Ministry of Defence for an interview with the Prime Minister, the late Hazan Majali. The place was almost death at first sight for me.

The appointment was set for ten o'clock at the Ministry of Defence building where Majali's office was located. I was about fifteen minutes early, and was told that Majali was not due to arrive until sharp on ten. As I was not allowed to wait for him in his office, I started pacing the corridor of the building.

A few minutes later I went into the toilet-room. By my watch it was now seven minutes to ten. Suddenly I felt the building being shaken by what I took to be successive shelling by a fighter-plane above. Panic gripped me. Another Arab revolution, I thought.

I hurried out of the toilet-room and found myself almost overpowered by heavy smoke. It was like being back in London's smog. People in the building were running helter skelter everywhere. I heard someone shouting that it was a time-bomb explosion. I ran swiftly back into the toilet-room, jumped through one of the windows and landed in a side lane.

Outside, in the main street in front of the building, was the Prime Minister, just alighting from his car. Crowds had gathered around him, watching the building.

'Let us thank Allah. Let us thank Allah. He has saved my life,' he was saying in a nervous voice.

The time-bomb, which had violently rocked the grey stone building and shattered Majali's office, had been specially set for him and hidden in one of the drawers of his office table. He was lucky. By a few minutes he had failed to keep his appointment with the violent death which had been mapped out for him by his assassins. The well-timed explosion, which took the lives of three innocent people in the office at the time, was attributed to 'terrorist activities of Nasser's agents'. I was one of the fortunate ones, thanks to the official who insisted that I wait outside the office until Majali should arrive.

The Prime Minister was a fast-talking and likeable gentleman, short, balding and stocky, full of charm and of a tolerant disposition. This was the impression I formed of

him when I went back to interview him about a week after the bomb incident. Also present at the meeting was the Minister of Information and Defence, Mr. Wasfi Tel, now the Prime Minister of Jordan.

Majali almost effervesced as he talked. Words bubbled forth in a fascinating flow.

A few months after I had left Jordan I heard in a radio news bulletin that Hazan Majali had been brutally slain by assassins.

What actually intrigued me and many other Western reporters about the first assassination attempt on Majali's life, which I had witnessed, was the press conference held two days later. At this conference Majali produced the apprehended would-be assassins.

They had been arrested in a bus station as they were about to board a bus for Damascus, Syria. One of them, a Jordanian, was the owner of a local hotel in Amman, and his brother was also implicated in the plot to kill many leading government members.

Making Friends with the Red Army

With African students in Moscow

A public park in Tashkent

The press conference had been convened at the main hall of

Amman's radio station, a few miles outside the city. I had gone on the personal invitation of the Prime Minister as a result of my earlier experience.

The supposed press conference was transformed suddenly into a trial. It became a kind of 'Kangaroo Court'. The accused men were questioned, prosecuted and convicted by the Prime Minister himself. The jury for the occasion was made up of Jordanian pressmen, all of whom sat around Mr. Majali.

Despite the possibility that the accused men— five in all—might have been innocent of the crime levelled against them, the whole trial was a mockery of justice and a show of power by Majali. The accused consisted of two Syrians, two Jordanians and a Lebanese.

The Prime Minister asked them to admit that the source of the bomb plot was Cairo. The sobbing men only admitted that they had come with the bomb from Beirut, where they had received their instructions:

'Get rid of Majali and return with his head if possible.'

The Prime Minister, not knowing what would happen to him in the future, got a big kick out of the story the men had related to the invited audience. He was all laughter and fun.

'But Allah protected me and frustrated these killers' attempt on my life,' he joked.

One of the journalists seated next to him encouragingly said, 'Long may you live, Mr. Prime Minister.' Majali smiled confidently.

A Western reporter was seated next to me. He had his doubts.

'The reason for the attempted murder of Majali might be traced not to Cairo but to the Palestinian Bedouins. They are dissatisfied with the misuse by the Jordanian Government of money from the U.N. for the welfare of refugees.

Most of the money goes into the pockets of Majali and his fellow cabinet members.'

No one, including this writer, was able to establish the real motive behind the finally successful and ruthless assassination of a man like Hazan Majali. I feel there were more hidden factors than one was led to believe.

Jordan, whose territory borders Israel, has the largest percentage of displaced Palestinian Arabs. They are more than 600,000 in number. Most of them are Bedouins, who formerly lived in tents in the deserts of 'Israeli-held Palestine'.

In Jordan today most of these unfortunate victims of historical and geographical events are housed in tents along the Israeli border, on the Jordanian side and close to Jerusalem. They are living in acute poverty. Their women, in flowing Arab garments, clutch their naked children as they go about in search of food and water. Each week a large number of them are reported dying from starvation, unhygienic environment and polluted water, which is not even fit for animals.

I visited some of these camps. There was misery and dejection in their faces as a few of them related to me, through interpreters, their stories of unhappiness, neglect and failure.

They live on the meagre supply of food issued to them by the United Nations through the Jordanian Government. They had been deprived of their 'houses, properties, farms and domestic animals when the Jews invaded and took over our land', they said.

'Our Arab brothers are not interested in our problems and welfare. They have been talking about helping us to get back to Palestine for years, but look at us today. All the money given to King Hussein by the United Nations to feed, house and clothe us is spent on his palace and his own country,' an old, bearded Arab, with twelve children and three wives, stated to me bitterly.

The environs of the camps where these poverty- stricken Arabs live were disturbing to any visitor's eyes. The sight was one of open drains, filth, squalor and dirty, unclad children.

In this inhumane and nightmare-like background one sees the pathetic life of the displaced Palestinians which our society has helped to create. Rain trickles through the roofs of their tattered tents. I saw adults and children sleeping on the bare floor, spreading bed-bug-ridden blankets over their thin bodies, while little babies moaned and cried from hunger. There was the occasion when an Arab woman gave birth to a child in one such tent. It was a horrifying experience under such unhealthy and despicable conditions. I saw it all and felt pity and sorrow for the woman.

These tall and handsome Bedouins are a race of people with remarkably fine features and aesthetic faces. They are known to be proud, warm-hearted and very independent, but warlike when aroused. By religion they are devoted Moslems, unlike their religiously lukewarm fellow Arabs.

What impressed me most of all about these underprivileged Arab refugees was that, despite their state of hunger, misery and hopelessness, they held on to their courage and hope, confident that sooner or later a solution of some kind would be found to their problems.

It is known today that the U.N. social workers have stepped in to relieve the congestion and misery of the Palestinian

refugees. Houses are being built for them—poor, but as good as can be found in any other Arab village. Children are being sent to school, and training has been instituted for adults.

By comparison with the other Arab capitals, Amman, the capital of Jordan, has very little to offer. Admittedly it has always been a peaceful town, unromantic and hardly indulging in such luxuries as Western-style restaurants, dance-halls or night-clubs. The serving of alcohol is prohibited.

Despite this lack of social amenities, King Hussein commands a certain amount of admiration and respect among his subjects.

The pride and glory of Jordan lies in the ancient city of Jerusalem. One comes to it after a long and arduous journey through rocky mountains, sand-dunes and untarred roads. This road starts from the Syrian border and runs through Amman. Further on you pass along the Dead Sea and Jericho.

I spent three weeks in King Hussein's Jordan, from where I hopped—and I mean hopped—into Israel under the threatening shadow of the protruding Bren- guns and fixed bayonets of both Israeli and Arab soldiers stationed at Mandelbaum Gate—the dividing frontier of both countries.

A foreign visitor can see that Jordan is rapidly catching up in the dramatic progress of Arab transition, with the variation that it is a constitutional monarchy, unlike the other Arab states.

Though a desert backwater, mountainous and agriculturally unproductive, revolutionary changes in political and living conditions are taking place in Jordan. Modern schools, hospitals, apartment houses and factories are springing up to replace dilapidated houses and tents.

The planning and success of this progress can be credited to the enlightened efforts of King Hussein himself. He is doing everything possible to steer his people from being wooed by what he terms 'Nasser's words of propaganda' against him and the Saudi Arabians.

Jordan's gross national annual income has tripled in the last decade to more than 262,000,000 U.S. dollars, and this has been achieved by the combined financial aid from both America and Britain of 753,000,000 U.S. dollars.

Under King Hussein's personal guidance, factories are being built all over the area for his less than 2,000,000 subjects. Jordan is now reported to be producing more fruit and vegetables than any other of the Arab states in the region.

Usable water is being diverted to transform the desert by the ingenuity of both Arab and foreign irrigation experts. Long-neglected Roman aqueducts are being used to make

thousands of acres of desert bloom. There is every hope that the country will become viable and depend no longer on foreign assistance.

It is evident that the country is forging ahead rapidly. King Hussein, who lives with his English-born wife Muna al Hussein in a modern, eight-room villa outside Amman, called Daret Alkair (House of Happiness), is reported to be planning to make Jordan a welfare state in the foreseeable future.

12 *Arrival in Jerusalem*

FOR its size, Jerusalem, 2,500 feet above sea level, a city built on hills, is one of the least peaceful spots on earth. She has always been in an imminent state of war, and echoes destruction.

As in the case of war-torn and politically unstable East and West Berlin, the Biblical city of Jerusalem is halved—the old and the new. This, if one may say so, is another offshoot of the Second World War.

Today the old part belongs to Jordan, while New Jerusalem stands as the capital of Israel. Its inhabitants, Arabs and Jews, are sworn enemies constantly at loggerheads with one another. Not a week passes by without being accompanied by an 'incident' involving the exchange of bullets.

For many centuries, Jerusalem, called the 'City of Peace', has been an arena for war and for displays of strength by the Arabs. Its annals are full of stories of bloodshed. The Bible unfolds this before our eyes.

Despite the state of threat, suspense, fear and suspicion which has always besieged Jerusalem, it is still the one city, above all, that matters to mankind.

In area the walled city is less than two miles square, yet for Christians, Jews and Moslems here is the holy place of their conflicting religions. It has today a combined population of 250,000 people, made up of all races, religions and creeds.

Here, on a hill outside the city walls, overlooking what are now ruined and dilapidated ancient buildings, the crucifixion of Christ took place; here was the site of the ascent of Mohammed, and the construction of the mighty Temple of Solomon. John the Baptist strolled these streets. Here, too, was the throne of David. The same city fell into the hands of Alexander the Great. Herod and Suleiman the Great were but two of the many famous men who lived in Jerusalem.

When I came to the historic city I found it difficult to appreciate the reasons for its attraction for many warring nations. True, it has a religious significance, but I hardly believe that this alone is enough to warrant the sacrifice of the lives of so many whose nations want to fly their flags on its soil.

Why all these nations of wealth, many of them with a history of harsh foreign subjection and persecution, should desperately covet and bleed to possess Jerusalem is still a mystery to one like me. The land in itself is practically

without water or fertility. Its only natural mineral resource is limestone. One sees hills and slopes everywhere. It has not a through road or a navigable river. By these standards one can see that, economically, Jerusalem has never been of great value. She has more likely been a disadvantage to her captors I had eagerly looked forward to visiting this land of ancient history and civilization which through Biblical, Koranic and Talmudic religious texts has become an intrinsic part of the lives of millions of believers.

The present era of crisis between Israelis and Arabs started as late as 1860, when Sir Moses Montefiore, an Englishman, embarked on a housing project to accommodate immigrant Jews. In World War I General Allenby captured the city and raised the Union Jack, the banner of the British Empire, over the territory. This banner was forcibly removed by the Jews in 1948 after heavy fighting and underground resistance.

In 1948, with the reluctant co-operation of Britain, the full backing of the United States and under the aegis of the United Nations, half of Jerusalem and its western surroundings were merged with 'Israeli-held Palestine'. At the time the majority of its inhabitants were Arabs.

This marked the birth of Israeli-Arab conflicts and the exodus of Jews from all over the world to the 'Promised Land'.

In 1949, with its helping hand now famous for the peaceful solution to the wars in Korea, the Congo and West Irian, the United Nations stepped in and halted the Arab-Israeli war. Open offensive ceased, while the combatants sporadically continued their assaults in order to keep the fire of their enmity kindled.

Under the supervision of the United Nations, a no-man's land, filled with mines and sharp-pointed, electrified barbed wire, was created. It runs through a church, a mosque and across the heart of the city. The loss of lives of both Jews and Arabs as a result of 'pocket incidents' occurs now and again.

I remember conversing with a U.N. official in Jordan's Jerusalem at the office of the British Consulate. I was waiting my turn to see Mr. C. S. Burgess, H.M. Vice-Consul, when the U.N. officer, an English captain, said:

'You must be new around here. I saw you a few minutes ago going too close to the border. You'd better be careful, old boy. It's quite common to die around there.

'What is that again?' I enquired, as if I had not understood him.

'When you are wandering about in no-man's- land, as you did this morning, either the Israeli soldiers or the Arabs will take a shot at you. The first soldier who sees anyone in that

area shoots first and asks questions later, no matter who you are.'

I wanted to know if this happened often. He was by now stuffing his pipe. He had a thick moustache.

'You can say that again, old chap. What do you think the U.N. forces are here for—to play a game of hide-and-seek? Not on your life.'

He stuck the pipe into his mouth and searched his pocket for a match.

'We are having a hard time telling which of the two Israeli or Arab-are more trigger-happy. Recently a

Jordanian soldier gunned down a bevy of tourists who were curiously nosing into Jordan from the Israeli side. Another time it was the Israeli police who fired at a handful of Arabs because they came too close to the barbed wire separating the two. I would watch out, old boy, if I were you.'

The U.N. official was correct, but I did not heed his warning, as the reader will find out later.

First, let me take you on a brief tour of old Jerusalem, among Arabs and Bedouins in flowing robes, tall red hats or heavy turbans, big clumsy shoes and treasured bushy beards.

On a beautiful sunny day the streets are crowded with Western tourists, most of them binocular- and camera carrying Americans. The walled market places, bazaars and narrow streets are filled with souvenir- hunters and Arab pedlars, money-changers and petty thieves. Ladies have to clutch on to their handbags and men look out for their back pockets. Wallets are lifted by the dozen every day.

When the burning sun strikes the houses, mostly of limestone, they glow with a pale golden colour. If you manage to climb to the top of the ancient wall around Jerusalem you will see the valley surrounding the city, and, beyond that, clusters of small houses scattered over distant, yet visible ridges.

The five days I spent seeing the city were in the company of a young and shrewd Arab boy. He was the son of the manager of the hotel where I was staying. He volunteered to show me around 'my city'. I could not convince him that I wanted no guide but could manage on my own.

'No master, many tourists Americans always guided by Ali. My name Ali. I will show every Jerusalem for you. No much charge me you. You my friend.'

I had no choice. Ali was persistent and not an easy one to be rid of. He was sixteen years old, thin, with a handsome face, and was always barefooted.

On the first morning of the tour, as we climbed the steep hill through the centre of the town into the market place, Ali pointed out to me a few landmarks, accompanied by descriptive gesticuations.

'That, my master, is Mount of Olives.' When he said this I glanced in the direction of his pointed finger. All I could see at a distance was an inconspicuous hill.

Soon, ahead of us rose a giant fortress, lifted high above the city. It was the citadel of King David, built on the three famous hills mentioned in the Bible: Mount Sion, Mount Moriah and Mount Ophel.

I walked through St. Stephen's Gate behind my young Arab friend.

'Here was where the first Christian martyr was stoned to death.'

We proceeded on to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, reputed to be the holiest church in Christendom. It was built at the site of the Crucifixion, the Burial and Resurrection. So stated my guide. Its present edifice was erected by the Crusaders.

It struck me as strange that this sacred church could be opened, shut and looked after only by a Moslem family. Their right to guard the place dates back centuries. Each Friday the drama and impact of Christ's Crucifixion is

re-enacted here. I saw Franciscan monks bearing a cross and climbing a steep hill, at intervals pausing to kneel and pray.

Nothing much is left today of the Temple of Solomon, except that its wall stands amid growing weeds and thorny grasses. This was the Wall, of Wailing, to which Jews have come for centuries to share their sorrows and humbly kneel in prayer.

We next made for the Mosque of Omar, the sacred place where Moslems pray five times a day. They bow and kneel, with hats placed on their heads and shoes off. This is the mosque which encloses the great rock from which Mohammed is believed to have ascended to heaven. His footprint was ingrained in the stone. I saw it. My guide, now reading from an Arabic pamphlet, added:

This is the same place where the Angel Gabriel buried his fingers in the rock to keep him from ascending into heaven with the Prophet Mohammed.'

It was a great slab of solid rock, about sixty by fifty feet in area, and twelve feet high. It spreads out in an uneven blackness. King Solomon used the rock as his altar of sacrifice. It was on this rock that Abraham prepared the sacrificial pyre for his son. It is a rock of legend, of sorrow and joy as one wishes to see it.

The old city is a strange place. There is no other place like it in the world that I have seen.

Ali and I walked through the narrow streets and soon came into Via Dolorosa, as if it were a common pathway. It rises in a series of steps, separated every now and then by a few feet of level ground, until it arrives at the level of Calvary.

'This was the very place where your Christ with his Cross fell down for the second time,' Ali mused to me, wrongly taking me for a Christian. I did not bother to correct his error.

Via Dolorosa, or Street of Sorrow, with its rising and painstaking progress up the hill, starts with curious dignity. It winds between high walls of monasteries. I could see that the walls were etched with the Stations of Christ's Cross.

'Here also, my African master,' Ali was saying as he flashed his white teeth in a smiling face, 'your Jesus Christ, after he fall down, he meet his mother Mary, and one man called Simon help him with his big Cross. We Moslems think Jesus was good man.
'So if you like him as a good man why don't you become Christian, Ali?' I demanded.

'No, I no like him that way. I like him because he Jewish man and Israeli Jews kill him. Judah give Jesus to Rome people in Italy. I no like become Christian. I am son for Allah,' he said with emphasis.

The frightfully narrow and congested street, with its detestable odours, soon became a pathway for heavily

loaded donkeys and asses. On both sides stretched dark alleys with rows of dilapidated white houses, with neither gardens nor breathing space. The whole place was a shambles.

What impressed me most of all about the shattered city was still the mosque, known also as the 'Dome of the Rock'. It stands majestically on Mount Moriah, and is looked upon as the most beautiful of its kind anywhere in the world. History has it that it was built by the Byzantines almost 1,500 years ago on the very site of King Solomon's temple. The interior is beautiful and captivating to the eyes. It is decorated with mosaics in fashionable symmetrical designs of colourful stained glass. I saw archways and pillars covered with pure gold and imprinted with precious dazzling stones. Here one can find all the ornaments with which ancient Jerusalem used to beautify the mosque.

In a few days Ali and I had wandered all over the town and seen as much as I wanted to see. I told him: 'I have now seen enough of Old Jerusalem. As my guide, I want you now to take me to New Jerusalem.'

Ali eyed me bitterly.

'My master, I think you crazy master. I no can go to Yehudi Jerusalem, Jewish people kill me. You also no can go, because Arab people kill you as spy for Yehudi' (meaning Jews).

'Why will the Arab people want to kill me? I am an African, not a Jew.'

'Arab people no care African or no African. You go Israel you no good master. Only United Nations soldiers allow go or come from Israel.'

I paid up Ali and was done with him. I had had enough of discouraging advice.

From my hotel Israel's Jerusalem was five minutes' walking distance. On my scooter it would take less than two minutes.

I had no exit visa from the Jordanian authorities, nor an entry visa into Israel. I was determined that somehow I must get across the border and reach Israel, no doubt under a hail of bullets if I defied the warning of the authorities.

It was a gamble with death, this much I knew. I was willing to take my chance.

The day came for my departure from the hotel in Old Jerusalem. It was ten in the morning, on a Saturday. I balanced myself on the heavily laden scooter and made for the Israeli-Arab frontier, Mandelbaum Gate. I was sweating and desperately gasping for breath and fresh air as I nervously proceeded. It was more than courage. It was suicide.

PART FIVE

ISRAEL

13 *Suicidal Entry into Israel's Jerusalem*

THE sound of my motor-scooter could have hardly been heard as it wended its way towards the forbidden Israeli-Arab frontier at the Mandelbaum Gate. It was going slowly, less than ten miles an hour. I wanted to avoid any unpleasant scene which a faster speed might invite.

Soon I was less than three yards away from the black and white barrier of the Jordanian military authorities post. Directly facing the barrier and separated by no-man's-land was the Israeli post.

A sign on Jordan's side to the right read: 'This is Jordan. Beyond is no-man's-land. Only U.N. officials allowed.'

I was now very close to the restricted border and had already killed the engine of my scooter. I noticed on each side of the barrier pole two little guardrooms. From each of the white rooms protruded two feet, covered in heavy black military boots. I could see neither the faces nor figures of the owners of the boots.

I quietly alighted, parked my scooter and walked towards one of the guardrooms. I could see, high up in towers, bombed buildings and posted at shattered wall windows, sentries and soldiers of both nations, clad in heavy battledress. They gazed suspiciously at one another. They were constantly alerted and had hidden themselves behind piled sandbags and swivelling machine-guns and rifles. This has been going on twenty-four hours a day since that red-letter day in 1949 when the U.N. stepped in and stopped the flow of blood.

At the sight of these determined soldiers, for a moment I almost lost grip of my courage. I managed to hold on to it and walked on timidly towards one of the guards.

I could now see more clearly the figures of the two men, each seated on a reclining chair. Their faces were not visible to me. They were buried in the pages of Arab-lettered newspapers. Neither of the soldiers saw me or felt my presence.

It looked a peaceful and uneventful day on the border, at least until I came along.

I moved closer to one of the men and sat down on an empty chair next to him. At the squeak of my chair the two men were quickly on their toes, pistols drawn and pointing in my direction. I could see from their dark brown uniforms that they were sergeants. One of them had a thick grey

moustache which spread over his mouth. I was calm, and hid my fear and nervousness at the sight of their weapons.

'Please, gentlemen, don't mind me. Kindly get on with your reading. I was just passing by and thought I should stop to say hello to you.'

Both showed frowning and unfriendly faces on hearing what I said. The one with the thick moustache spoke.

'If I may ask you, passing by to where, sir?'
I pointed towards Israel.
'Just across there, if you don't mind, sir.'
'Not on your life, mister. If you want to go to the

Jews across there you must get on your motor-scooter and return to Amman, then to Damascus and across to Beirut. From Beirut you catch a boat or plane to Cyprus. I believe there is a ship going from Limassol to Haifa.

'But, my brother, you are asking me to travel almost one thousand miles in order to get into Israel when I can do it from here in less than a minute. All I need to do is to walk or ride on my scooter across no- man's-land and I am in Israel. Please be reasonable with me, my good brothers.'

Both of them looked disgusted with me. They were not impressed by my pleas.

They exchanged a few words in Arabic. The short and heavy one left to use the telephone. A few minutes later he was back.

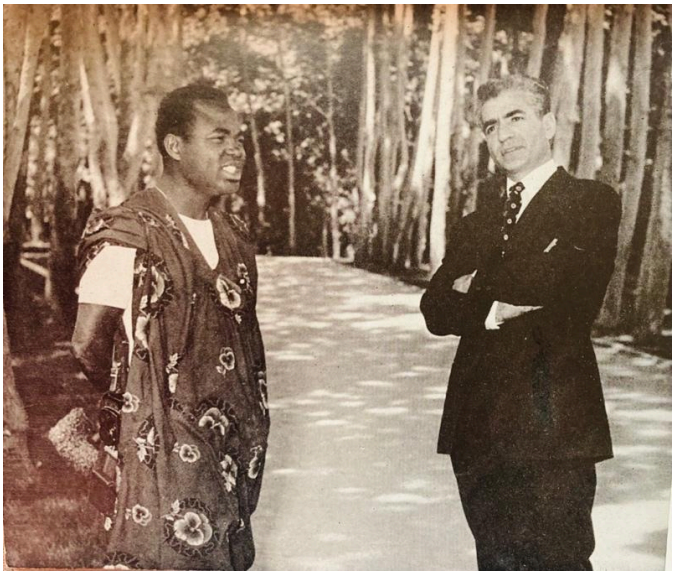
'Look here, "brother". You must return to Jordan the same way you came. If you give us any more trouble and argument, or this "brother" business, we shall arrest you. These are our instructions. Now get that stinking scooter out of here.'

His companion added, 'Looking at your scooter alone makes us sick.'

I was stumped. Unhappily I hopped on my scooter, steered round and pretended to make for Old Jerusalem as ordered.

Both watched me disappear round the corner. 'Thank goodness we are rid of that idiot,' I imagined them saying, by the expression on their faces as I drove away.

In less than seven minutes I was back again at the same spot. I had resolved to crash through the wooden gate. I had no doubt that my sudden decision might be suicidal.



I meet the Shah of Iran

A chat with Mrs. Golda Meir of Israel

Israeli Arab Bedouin women at a well

When I returned I could see only one of the soldiers. He reclined lazily on the chair, smoking a cigarette, his feet propped up on another chair. He was the one with the moustache, busily reading a newspaper. At the sound of the engine of my scooter he nervously put his paper aside and glanced around. I stayed put on my machine.

"Sorry to bother you again. Where is your mate?' I enquired.

He stood up, threw away his cigarette and rested his right hand firmly on the butt of his revolver.

'Not you again! What do you want him for this time? He is speaking on the phone. You talk to me and make it fast or you will go to jail. You must be looking for trouble around here.'

He moved closer to me, breathing down my shoulder.

'There is no need to get excited, my friend. I am heeding your warning. I don't want any trouble with you.'

'Good boy. You know what is best for you,' he said triumphantly. 'Now what can we do for you?'

'You see, I was on my way back to Amman and I could not find the way. I wonder if you have any road map of Jordan you could give me?'

'Sure, anything we can do to get you out of this place. You wait here for a minute and I will fetch you a good road map."

In the meantime the engine of my scooter was still noiselessly running. In front of me, next to the barrier pole, was a narrow pathway, wide enough for me to squeeze through with my scooter at top speed.

I had one corner of my eye glued to the man as he went into his little guardroom, and the other on the narrow path. It was less than two yards away from me.

I clamped my right hand on the throttle of the scooter. It jerked briefly and raced forward. Soon it was picking up speed. I steered it towards no-man's-land and across to the Israeli post.

I heard the shouting voices of the Arab guards barking at me.

'Here is the map, come back here!'

'Come back or we will shoot you! Come back here!'

I heard the impact of shots as successive bullets zoomed past my head and went left and right of me. One of the bullets burst the tyre of my back wheel.

It was too late, I had made it across Arab soil and no-man's land. The Israeli post to which I was heading was barred with a black and yellow pole. I crashed through it blindly and landed on my back.

The scooter and the heavy load it carried sprawled everywhere. Petrol was gushing profusely from the tank of the scooter.

An Israeli border guard, along with a handful of gun-toting soldiers, ran up with a stretcher. I was carried into an office at the frontier.

'Tell me where the bullet hit you. Don't move. Now, before we find out what it's all about we shall call a doctor, one of them was saying excitedly.

'Thank you, I am all right. I don't need a doctor.'

They were feeling all over my body to find any injury I might have sustained.

'So you are O.K. Well, get up and tell us why you came crashing through the border.' He paused for a moment and looked through the window.

'Here come two Jordanian soldiers. I'd better go out and find out what they want before any more shooting starts.'

He left me in the room with some soldiers and walked out to meet the two Arab security men. Through the open window we could faintly hear their conversation.

Arab: We do not want any trouble here today. We only want that man returned to us.

Israeli: Why? He is in Israel now.

Arab: He has no clearance or authority from us to come through.

Israeli: I can't turn him over to you until I have checked with higher authorities.

Arab: We don't care about that. We want him, and now.

Israeli: Well, you will just have to wait until I get instructions.

Arab: Then before any trouble starts we shall call in the United Nations officials.

Israeli: Go right ahead. We are not going to let you have him until we talk to our Foreign Office.

Arab: Can you find out from that man what nationality he is?

Israeli : That I think I can find out and tell you. But you must wait where you are. Do not come any further on to Israeli soil.

I heard no further reply. I got to my feet and went to the door.

'You will have to get back into the office. Those Arabs want you, dead or alive,' he said.

'But you are not going to hand me over to them, or are you?'

'Well, as I told them, I can't promise anything, and that goes for you too. I must check with the Foreign Office!' He grabbed a telephone book and scanned through its pages. 'There is a fellow I know in the African section of our Foreign Ministry. His name is Ben-Hurin.'

He scurried for a pencil and piece of paper.

This Ben-Hurin knows a lot about Africa and likes Africans. I think I should talk to him first. I am afraid you are going to create international trouble on this border today.'

He demanded to have my passport and Israeli visa.

'I see here in your passport that you have no Israeli visa. Well, this makes things worse for you.'

He promptly added: 'A good thing you were born in Ghana. We are friendly to the Ghanian Government. Wait a minute.' (He paused.) 'You are a British subject and you are using a British passport.'

He jotted down the number of the passport, stood up and went out to the Jordanians.

'This fellow is travelling on a British passport. I believe that answers your query?'

'We want him returned to us immediately,' the Arabs insisted once more.

Soon the Israeli guard stormed back into the office looking more confused than ever.

"This is the first time in all my ten years in this job that we have been faced with such a problem. I will get in touch with Ben-Hurin. He will tell me what to do, or take this problem out of my hands.' He got through to Ben-Hurin by phone. They had a long conversation.

After his discussion with Ben-Hurin, with a smile which which showed his relief, he said:

'I have the order to let you into Israel, visa or no visa. But first I must wait until Hurin gets in touch with the British Consul, and U.N. and the Ghanaian Ambassador. They will fix this matter with the Arab authorities. We can't go to the Arabs and they can't come beyond that pole to us.'

After two hours' wait the U.N ., British and Ghanaian officials all appeared almost at the same time.

It was the British Vice-Consul, Mr. Burgess, who 'fixed' everything.

'Now, Mr. Ajala, we shall take your passport to the Jordanian authorities to be stamped. Everything has been straightened out. Only don't get into any more trouble,' he advised.

The U.N. soldier was a heavily set, bulky Danish captain. He wanted to know:

'Why in the hell can't you do this on a week-day, when everybody is in the office? I was home in bed when I was called by the Arabs here.'

I apologized for the inconvenience I had caused everyone concerned.

'You must go to see Ben-Hurin on Monday at the Foreign Ministry. He will be expecting you in his office at ten

o'clock,' said the Israeli guard.

After my passport had been stamped by the Israelis I left with the Ghanaian Ambassador for *New Jerusalem* in Israel.

The following Monday morning I bought a copy of the *Jerusalem Post*, the only English-language paper published in Israel. Under a column head-line, captioned 'Visitors' Gallery' by George Wigoder, I read:

'One of the most flamboyant characters around Israel these days is Olabisi Ajala, the Ghanaian-born Nigerian whose most unorthodox entry into Israel caused a brief but explosive furore last week. He whizzed through the Mandelbaum Gate without entry or exit visa. No one who knows Mr. Ajala will be surprised. His hair-raising adventures are seldom orthodox...'

14 *An interview with Israel's Golda Meir*

ONE of the least publicized and most valuable achievements of the new State of Israel is the profitable exploitation of the once hopeless and neglected Negev Desert. Today the incredible ingenuity of Israel's engineers and research scientists is harnessing the desert in order to make it inhabitable as well as agriculturally productive.

I came to discover this and many other aspects of Israel's revolutionary and determined fortitude against natural obstacles during my two months' tour of the 'Promised Land'. I made an extensive coverage of the land, starting from
Jerusalem and then going to Haifa. From Haifa I made for Tel Aviv—'the Paris of the Middle East'—and on to Beersheba, one of Israel's many scientific and experimental research centres. Through the sprawling Negev Desert I wound up in the fishing town of Elath, Israel's southernmost city, delicately perched on top of hills along the Red Sea and overlooking Jordan's Port of Akaba. I took the same route back to Jerusalem on my motor-scooter.

Except for a few bumps and holes here and there, the road was well kept and asphalted all the way.

The Monday following my unorthodox arrival in Israel I went to the Foreign Ministry to keep my appointment with Mr. Ben-Hurin. He was the chief of the Afro-Asian Department. Ben-Hurin is a pleasant, reserved and softly spoken career diplomat and is very well informed on Asian and African political and economic affairs. At the time of writing this book he is Israel's Ambassador to Burma.

I found him seated in his office behind a massive table covered with a disarray of African newspapers and thick, bulging files. He had a cup of tea waiting for me on his table.

'Come and sit down, Mr. Ajala, I was expecting you. Do you take sugar and milk with your tea?'

'Yes, please,' I answered, as he warmly shook my hand and invited me to sit on a chair opposite him.

'I'm afraid we haven't much time to talk now. The Foreign Minister, Mrs. Golda Meir, will see you in her office at ten thirty. That will be in another ten minutes.'

"This is a pleasant surprise. It is one of two things I had in mind to ask you. The second is that I would like to visit a few Arab villages in Israel, if it can be arranged. I am rather

curious to see their living conditions. Oh yes, and I must apologize for the trouble I caused you last Saturday.'

'That was nothing. It is not me you ought to thank but the Foreign Secretary. She instructed us to let you into Israel. She was afraid of what the Arabs might do to you if our frontier guards returned you to the Jordanians.'

He stopped to pour himself a cup of tea.

'About visiting the Arab villages, I think that may be difficult. You need a special permit from the military police for that. Anyway, you can mention it to the Foreign Secretary. She should be able to authorize it.'

He glanced at his wrist watch and downed his tea.

'It's time we were going up to the Foreign Minister's office. You know, she returned from a tour of West Africa only a few weeks ago. She was in Nigeria and Ghana.'

He unhooked his jacket from the hanger, straightened his tie and led me out of the office. We went through a long corridor which brought us into an open courtyard where there were gardens of beautiful flowers and shrubs.

The large oblong office of Mrs. Golda Meir is on the first floor of a white, barrack-like and detached wooden building. Here in Hakiryia, a district of Israel's Jerusalem which looks somewhat like a slum area, is the nerve centre

of all the government's activities- foreign and domestic as well as military strategic co- ordination.

When I stepped into Mrs. Meir's office, trailing behind BenHurin, a woman's voice, whose owner was hidden by the half open door, quietly welcomed:

'*Shalom*, Mr. Ajala.'

The voice was that of the outstanding Chicago- born Foreign Minister of Israel, Mrs. Golda Meir. 'Shalom', translated from Hebrew, means 'Peace'.

She was on her feet, coming from behind her table to shake my hand. Ben-Hurin stood to one side. Her figure towered over me.

'Here,' I ruminated, 'is the first lady of international politics and the only woman Foreign Minister.'

I was quick to repeat her word of greeting.

'*Shalom*, your Excellency. You will hardly appreciate how deeply grateful I am to you for allowing me into Israel after causing you and your officials so much headache.'

'It's not often we have this kind of trouble. Your bravery impressed us. We thought we should crown it. Just as we are trying very hard to be friendly to the Arabs, so we want to

be friends to every person irrespective of his race, religion and nationality. Israel is as much your home as Nigeria.'

She turned round and engaged Hurin in Hebrew conversation. It took the moment to glance around the room and have a closer look at Mrs. Meir.

Her office lacked luxurious furniture, yet it was neat, conservative and pleasant to the eyes. Except for a few paintings and photos hanging on the white walls, a large brown conference table and a few guest chairs, the atmosphere of the room was dull. Her own writing-table was spotlessly clean and had only a copy of *Marriv*, a Hebrew newspaper.

Of Mrs. Golda Meir herself, one first notices her gracefulness. She is tall, of medium build and is unsophisticated in appearance. Below her wrinkled forehead gaze a pair of penetrating and searching brown eyes. Her summer dress was simple and inconspicuous but not particularly elegant. There was not a dash of make-up on her sensitive face. The natural beauty of her greying black, curly hair, which she wore in a neat bun, contributed to her air of grace and simplicity.

My interview with her, in an informal atmosphere, lasted forty-five minutes. The main topics of our discussion were the Israeli-Arab relationship and Israel's role among the new African nations.

Meir: 'Tell me, Mr. Ajala, how long are you stopping in Israel, and what do you plan to do while you are with us?'

'I hope to spend two months and visit a few places. I shall look up some African students.

Meir: 'You will find a large number of African students in the Agricultural College, the Hebrew University and Technical College in Haifa. It is our desire to help the newly independent African countries. We are offering them scholarships. Most of them here now are from Ghana. The—'

The unannounced entry of a dark-skinned, beautiful lady in white uniform interrupted her sentence. She was carrying a tray on which she balanced cake, a pot of tea and teacups.

Meir: 'The Arabs, and Nasser in particular, have been saying that we are serving "colonial interests" in Africa. Nasser calls it "Israel's economic imperialism" in the new African nations. What has Nasser done to help the African states, besides using his Radio Cairo as propaganda against us? Let the Arabs do something fruitful to counter-balance our aid to African countries instead of using words.'

'I take it, then, that Israel's interest in Africa is more of a humanitarian gesture than "imperialism". Could it also be interpreted as an attempt to subvert the newly independent African nations to your side and against the Arabs?'

Meir: 'It is nothing outside humanitarian interest. We are a peace-loving nation. It will not be necessary for us to line up Africans on our side against the Arabs. We are helping President Nkrumah of Ghana, who is a good friend of Nasser, to train his air force. We have many Israeli doctors, nurses and engineers all over Ghana. We are helping Ghana to start her shipping line the Black Star, and are contributing to her economy and industry. These are all friendly gestures which we are ready to extend to other African nations if they want our help. No string is attached.'

'I certainly do not want to sound impertinent, but I would like you to enlighten me about two other questions on this subject.'

Meir: 'Please feel free to ask any question. I shall be delighted to answer them within the scope of my knowledge.'

Ben-Hurin, who had been sitting a few feet from Mrs. Meir, keenly listening to the discussion, now quickly drew his chair closer to the Foreign Minister. He offered me a cigarette.

I asked: 'Your Excellency will recall the time of the French referendums in her colonies in Africa, asking the people to vote in favour of or against integration with France?'

Meir: 'Yes, I remember it very well. In fact all the French colonies voted in favour of integration except Guinea, which voted for independence.'

'My question is about Guinea, madam. After Guinea voted against France, De Gaulle ordered out of the country all French workers including teachers, doctors and nurses. Not that alone: school textbooks, blackboards, chairs, tables and medical equipment were all packed and shipped back to France. I now vividly recall that Israel was the first country to which President Sekoure Toure of Guinea appealed for help and for the supply of doctors, teachers and nurses. Israel, I gathered, bluntly refused to aid Guinea. Can you say anything about this?'

Meir: 'Mr. Ajala, you are right about that. I should have known that this would be a point you wanted to raise.'

At this stage Ben-Hurin shyly volunteered to comment on the issue. Mrs. Meir had no objection.

'The facts are quite simple, and, if I may say so, very regrettable. France is a very close ally of Israel in our trouble with the Arabs. We are not prepared to do anything that will strain our good relationship with the French Government. If we had given any help at the time to Guinea we would have certainly lost favour with France.'

He waited for my reaction.

'I can very well appreciate your fear, but the fact remains that your alliance with the new African nations is based on humanitarianism and for Israel to have helped Guinea would not have done much damage.'

'What is the second question?' Mr. Ben-Hurin wanted to know.

I remarked that it was on Israel's role in the United Nations concerning the debate on Algeria's independence.

'While all the Afro-Asian member countries voted in favour of Algeria's independence from France, why did Israel openly oppose it and side with France?'

Mrs. Meir's answer was short and precise:

'Israel voted for Morocco's independence against France in the U.N. But when Morocco became independent she joined hands with the other Arab states against us. This was some kind of a lesson to us.'

If I may ask you, madam, what can eventually be the outcome of the Israeli-Arab unfriendly relationship, not to say war?'

Meir: 'We Israelis have always wanted peace with the Arabs and we are very optimistic that it will come about sooner or later.'

'Have you any idea when this peaceful understanding may come?'

Meir: When the Arabs realize that we can do much to help them in their still primitive way of living and farming. We are also prepared to help with their soil erosion and make available to them Israeli engineers and scientists to transform their vast desert into a productive land. There is certainly a lot we can both do for each other in the long run, Mr. Ajala. I look forward to the day when we shall sit around a conference table with them.'

Mrs. Golda Meir went on to say that she was not of the opinion that militarism was the answer to the difficulties.

'It will take calm-headed, mutual understanding and courage to achieve this goal. Nasser is our greatest headache.'

I pointed out: 'When I was in the Arab states I often heard that the Arabs in Israel are subject to harsh treatment and oppression by the Israelis. This could not very well be true?'

Meir: 'I can assure you that there is no truth in this allegation. The Arabs have been saying this and making similar baseless accusations against us for years. In our Parliament we have about five Arab members, one of them a staunch communist. He has been in our Knesset since it was started in 1948.

'Like the Jews and Christians, the Arabs in Israel have equal rights. Some of them are in our universities and colleges and on kibbutzim. They are guaranteed fundamental rights and equality before the law. Thousands of them who left Israel in 1948 for the Arab states were taken back into Israel and are now living normal lives among us.'

'I have taken too much of your time, madam. It is really very kind of you to receive me.'

She rose from her chair and came round to where I was standing.

'It's a pleasure to be able to answer your questions. If there is anything I can do to make your stay here more pleasant please let me know.'

'That reminds me of another request, your Excellency. I was asking Mr. Ben-Hurin if I could visit a couple of Arab villages while I am in Israel.'

Ben-Hurin quickly interjected.

'I was telling our friend Mr. Ajala that there is nothing much he could see in these villages. It's all much the same as in the Arab states.'

'I think Mr. Ajala will understand that,' Mrs. Meir said, looking squarely into my eyes. 'We do not normally

encourage visitors and tourists to go to the Arab settlements and villages.'

'Why is that?' I asked.
'I'll tell you why. Our Arabs can be very touchy and sometimes violent.

They do not like being paraded to foreign visitors and tourists.'

'With the little Arabic I can speak I think I can get along with them,' I suggested.

'If you insist then I think we can arrange that for you. You will have to be very careful when you go to any of these villages and settlements. I am sure you won't mind if we have two of our military officers to meet you when you go there. They can protect you and show you round the places.'

I had no objection. It was agreed that during my tour of the country I would visit Nazareth in the Galilee area, and Isofiya village on Mount Carmel, outside Haifa.

As I left the office I was still perplexed about the age of Mrs. Meir, which I had difficulty in guessing and had not the courage to ask.

15 *The Land of Israel*

BEFORE I proceeded on a five-week jaunt in other parts of Israel I spent six hectic days in the bustling and booming city of New Jerusalem, just to look and hear.

Not much of a surprise to me was the unique contrast I found in every phase of life between the Arab and Israeli sides of the city. While one is increasingly catching up with modern civilization, the other is sunk in antiquity and rapidly degenerating into oblivion, despite its religious inheritance and possessions.

As I was to discover, Israel's Jerusalem has its own discouraging bitterness.

Standing high on Mount Scopus today, where Titus camped in A.D. 70 before he captured Jerusalem, are two of Israel's valuable possessions, Hadassah Hospital and the Hebrew University. The two magnificent buildings, once overflowing with students, the sick, nurses and doctors, stand empty and neglected. No Israeli, except military guards, is allowed to wander about this area or visit any of the buildings. They lie a mile inside the Jordan territory-an

island inside a foreign land.

Famed Mount Scopus is still very much an area of contention between Jordan and Israel. While the Israelis maintain that it is part of their land, the Jordanians insist that it has always been a part of Jordan.

Away from Mount Scopus and other trouble spots along the Israel-Jordan frontier, I went into the heart of New Jerusalem. Among many places and buildings of interest are the new Hebrew University, Knesset (Parliament), and, going back in history, Mount Zion, the Tomb of King David and Herod's Cave. I found also the imposing building of Hechal Shlomo, the seat of the Chief Rabbinate.

It is the beauty and simple architecture of the spread-out Hebrew University that sticks in your mind. In the course of my travels from the Middle East through Central and Far East Asia I could not find another place of higher education which could match Jerusalem's Hebrew University. There are almost 10,000 students from different parts of the world gaining education there.

Hebrew University, I was told by its bearded public relations officer, an American, offers a curriculum in practically every field of higher study: medicine, the humanities, advanced science, agriculture, law and post-graduate work.

'Most of our foreign students come from Africa. The lecturers have found that they are very studious and knowledgeable, despite language difficulties.'

As I was staying on the campus of the university, a couple of times I saw the late President of Israel, Itzkak Ben-Zvi strolling into one of the buildings very early in the morning and leaving late at night. I was later told that he had a private study in the university where he did research for a voluminous book on Asian Jews and their legends.

Any way you look at it, New Jerusalem is a fascinating place. Its cafes are patterned on those of Vienna. It has Bohemian-style jazz-clubs hidden in cellars, and more than a hundred Jewish synagogues scattered all over the city, mostly in small side streets.

While Sunday is a regular working day all over Israel, Saturday is not.

If there is any day of the week on which the Arabs could successfully invade Israel, and conquer it without lifting a finger, it is the Jewish Sabbath.

The Sabbath starts at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday. Shops, government offices, schools, clubs, restaurants and other public places are closed well before noon every Friday. There is no movement of traffic or any kind of transportation. The streets are deserted. The whole of Israel, particularly Jerusalem, becomes a ghost

country, streets completely empty, with not a soul in sight. Jerusalem seems a city in deep mourning and meditation. Except for the hospital and synagogues, which remain open, everything comes to an abrupt halt. Anyone found driving a car about in the city is, in the eyes of religious fanatics, a son of Satan and a sinner.

At seven o'clock every Saturday evening pandemonium sets in. The streets instantly become overcrowded with people pushing and jostling in their regained freedom of movement.

The modernity and progress of Israel are to be found not only in its capital but all over the country in such places as Beersheba, Haifa, Tel Aviv, Nazareth, Tiberias, Elath, Rehovat and on kibbutzim.

When I was in Tel Aviv I could not get away from the feeling that I was back in Paris. The streets are lined with cafes and coffee-bars with men and women sunning themselves lazily as they sit sipping coffee around tables on the pavements.

I frequented a popular cafe on Duzingoff Street, called the Kassit. Here I made friends with a number of young Israeli pseudo-musicians, sculptors, artists, writers and would-be Bohemians and beatniks. Most of them are expert gigolos, parasites and party gate- crashers. 'The Midnight Set', as they are called, are full of fun, likeable and good mixers. They live for traditional jazz and wild midnight private

parties. They usually attire themselves in 'beat' clothing, flaming red socks, sandals and shorts. During the day they stay in bed, and from about 4 p.m. they are out in flocks like birds, making for 'Kassit'. Here is their centre for gossip, and their hide-out. With the 'Set', politics and differences between the Arabs and Israelis at Mandelbaum Gate are none of their concern.

Everything about Tel Aviv is as modern as any big city in Europe. There are new imposing apartment buildings, congested shopping streets, diplomatic quarters, beaches along which one finds fine hotels and long-legged charming girls in bikinis. Judaism has little or no role to play in this part of Israel.

I went on to Haifa and found myself in the industrial outpost of Israel. Half the city of Haifa is built on Mount Carmel, infested by modern residential quarters, while the other half on the lowland serves as the country's main port and source of industrial income. There are more banks here than in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv put together. In Haifa also is the nation's leading engineering and technical institute—the Technion.

Farther north of Haifa I visited Acre, the ancient seat of the Crusaders and the Ottoman Turk. Here is a city of mosques and fortifications. Here was the town of the East on which Napoleon laid his unsuccessful siege for sixty days in 1799. Soon after, the Egyptians wrested it from the Turks, only to be driven out by European forces, who returned the city to

Turkey. Acre is reputed by the Israelis to be one of the most ancient cities in the world. Here also lies the flower-covered tomb of the Bahai'i faith's founder, Baha'ulla, who was chased out of Iran with his believers. Acre is today a city of handicrafts and historical landmarks, where I admired beaten copperware and saw the crypt of St. John the Apostle.

I stopped for a few hours in Tiberias, remembered by Christians for the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes by Christ to feed his hungry disciples.

My journey to Beersheba, through the Negev Desert and Elath, was the most fascinating and interesting. In this era I found how Israelis are struggling to surmount the Arab threat and the natural hindrances to agriculture which constantly face their country.

Beersheba, where Abraham is reported to have dug his well and his son Isaac to have built an altar, has become a centre of atomic and experimental research. In and around Beersheba were many Arab Bedouins, most of them living in tents on the desert and mountain ridges. Beersheba has become a pioneering city, full of life and change. It was in Beersheba that I saw the desert research centre and its pioneering efforts to push back the desert. Most of its inhabitants are in the military force patrolling the deserts against 'Arab snipers who come in from the mountains beyond the desert to attack Israelis at dusk'.

From Beersheba it was easy to find my way through mountains and canyons to the Dead Sea, the lowest spot on earth, and to the Gulf of Elath.

Not far from Elath I paid a visit to King Solomon's fabled mines. Unfortunately, there is not a mine left in the ancient area. Elath, though small, is an impressive place, possessing an underwater world of weird, multi-coloured fish and coral. Elath is today the second largest port in Israel and from it many ships travel to the countries of Asia and Africa. It never rains in this part of Israel, and most of the food and vegetables are sent from other parts of the country.

Everywhere I went remarkable changes were apparent. This is a result of the resolute effort by the Israelis to make theirs a country of progress, worth living in and handing on to coming generations.

16 *What is a Jew?*

To MY utmost amazement I came to realize during my visit to Israel that there are two distinct classes of Jews.

There are the poverty-stricken, dark-skinned Jews, whose slum-like residential quarters can be found on the fringe of every city in Israel. These are immigrant Jews from India, Yemen, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Morocco, Egypt, Iran, Algeria and like places. Most of them are housed in dilapidated wooden buildings. They make up the 'second class' citizens of Israel.

The European immigrant Jews live in comfortable homes and are given loans of large sums of money by the government to build homes and start private business. With the 'black Jews', as they are identified in whispers, it is the opposite. They live in an unpleasant environment, in muddy and neglected areas, with sometimes only shacks built of rusted empty drums for protection. In places like Beersheba and Jerusalem I saw families of five to seven crammed into a little one-room shack. It was a sight of unhealthiness and abhorrence. There was no bathroom, sink or water within a quarter of a mile.

While I cannot say that there was evident racial discrimination against this class of people, I can emphasize the fact that they are not enjoying equality with, say, their white-skinned counterparts. The 'black' Jew is usually a labourer, servant, truck-driver, road- sweeper or is in some such mean job.

Apart from the Moslem Arabs in Israel, whose living conditions are the worst, the black Jews occupy the lowest level in Israeli society.

An Israeli correspondent, Mr. Kefor Yeroham, writing for the influential Indian daily journal, published in Delhi, *The Statesman*, on 23 February 1961, says:

'The Indian (Jewish) settlers I met in this small, new township, set down in the barren wastes of Negev Desert, all agreed on one thing: that life was really hard in Israel.'

The Israeli correspondent added: 'One of them, even in the presence of a government official, said that working conditions were "as in jail". Most of the immigrants from India have had their fares paid by the Jewish Agency, and would have to refund this money if they wish to return. This is the principal obstacle in the way of perhaps a quarter of those now in Israel who would wish to do so.'

The sorry state of this helpless class of people often makes me wonder doubly as to just who is a Jew. Is it religious entity or race? It must be one of the two. To the traditional

and illogical Jews it is a combination of both. Others see it quite differently.

Though I was in Israel for two months, I found it terribly difficult to discover an answer to my question. In my search I found there are no common racial characteristics. Not all Jews can speak Hebrew, despite the fact that it is the official language of the land. Yet that sense of identity as a tribal group prevails among them and serves as the core of their unity.

One thing is certain, 'Judaism' is not race. 'We are a group set apart from others. We share our sorrows, loves, histories and bitter experiences,' one Russian immigrant told me in Rehovat.

I had often read about and met odd individuals who call themselves Jews though belonging to such peoples as American Negroes, Japanese and even Chinese. They will tell you that they are devoted Jews by 'race'.

The Jews you meet abroad give the impression all the time that they are members of an oppressed and persecuted race. You are expected to feel sorrowful, sympathetic and sentimental towards them even when they ask you to pay for a glass of water.

Admittedly, a Jew never pretends or gives the impression that he is religiously or racially superior to a non-Jew. He is indifferent to an image-worshipper. He will tell you that

'Christ was a Jew who read too many comics and suddenly became too adventurous for himself and his race. He was playing one against the other.'

I was often told by members of the younger generation that 'Christ was a son of God, as he claims, but all we good Jews are also sons of God, just like the Moslem Arabs.'

One can see that today Judaism is still a tribal religion, which seems to be losing its grip, especially among the younger generation.

Though at one time to be a Jew in certain societies, such as Germany, was to be considered an outcast and the scum of the earth, often producing a melancholy complex and fear, today it is the opposite. To be a Jew is to have pride and sentiment in the fact. The state of Israel was established to give expression to this pride. In Israel there is no one to look down upon someone else because he is a Jew.

The birth of Israel, one of the greatest achievements of our time, has re-created and restored Jewish culture, traditions, language and civilization. What other people on earth have undertaken such an arduous task and succeeded?

As it looks now, it is much easier to be a Jew than ever before. It would be safe to conclude that a Jew is, roughly, anyone who says he is, and professes the Jewish religion. This is all you need to declare to an Israeli consul anywhere

in the world in order to gain a free passage and entry into Israel, no matter how remote a place you may come from.

Sammy Davis, Jnr ., an American Negro singer, professes to be a Jew, as does a young Japanese who is now living in Israel.

My only difficulty was that when I visited Arab villages in Israel I could not see the difference between Jew, Christian and Moslem. They all have a striking physical resemblance.

Apart from the multifarious achievements of Israel in all walks of life, I was impressed by the sense of individualism, independence and courage of its youth. This younger generation is an energetic, cheerful, forceful and uninhibited lot.

Unlike the adults of the country, these young ones, creating a world of their own, do not fanatically embrace the religion of the land,nor the official Hebrew language. Most of them speak very good English as well as Hebrew. They believe fervently in peace and in living side by side with the Arabs.

'Although not at the cost of losing our prestige and identity,' a girl at the Hebrew University stated. 'To our fathers, Judaism may have implied a

race, but to us it is a universal religion like Christianity, Hinduism or Islam. I am for peace with the Arabs now and not later,' said another lady, Miss Shariat Elizira, a music

student at the Conservatorium. Twenty-one-year- old Miss Shariat Elizira went on to say:

'I was born here in Jerusalem and lived among the Arab Moslems before the partition. We played together and ate from the same bowl. There was never any hatred between us then. I believe we could still get along with them if it were not for the warring leaders of our country and the Arab states.'

What captivated me most of all about Israel during my sojourn was the radiant and scintillating beauty of the young women. Beside their breathtaking attractiveness, they are graceful and unsophisticated. The indigenous Israeli woman is usually tall, elegant and dark-skinned, with a soft, cultured voice. She possesses a refined manner, jet black hair and a tempting pair of long legs. I did not find any other country in which there were so many beautiful and graceful women. Nearly all of these women have served in the military forces of their country at one time or another. They are proud to have been born in Israel. They are well informed, full of humour and very fun- loving. Their only regret is that so many Jews died during the war.

For each Israeli youth, male [and female], at about the age of eighteen, military service is compulsory. He is conscribed and given a rigorous military training. He actually takes part in manoeuvres in the desert, goes on night patrols and uses high- powered military weapons. The women drive, like

female versions of Stirling Moss, battered jeeps on rugged desert roads.

One has to see young Israeli soldiers to believe that they can be tougher and better trained than soldiers in the armies of most countries. However, they are, I noticed, poorly equipped.

These youths are responsible for the revolutionary system of farming in Israel, called kibbutzim—a sort of collective farms.

There is, on the many kibbutzim I visited, an efficient and spectacular system patterned on a democratic labour organization. There is no boss or director. Equality among members of a kibbutzim is the motto. The financial gain from every agricultural product planted, harvested and sold by public auction in the market place is returned into the purse of the kibbutzim. Out of this fund, blue uniforms, medical equipment and food are provided.

On nearly every kibbutzim there are a clinic, elementary and secondary schools and technical classes. You can find small theatres and all sorts of recreational amenities. It is a world within itself.

The strange thing about these kibbutzim is that most of the people who started them are orphans or displaced persons. They have emigrated to Israel from Europe. Their age on arrival in the country was anything from two years upward.

On reaching Israel, they had first gone to orphan establishments like Ben Shemen Home for Youth, which I visited. Here most of them were schooled and trained in whatever field of work they wanted to dedicate their lives. Once they reach this 'home' they lose their sense of aloofness or loneliness, As they grow older, they come to believe that each has a role to play in the development and progress of the 'Promised Land'.

Though Israel has been planned by far-sighted older men, the younger people of the country are its builders and driving force.

17 *Conversation with an Arab in Israel*

THE disgrace of the Israeli Government is the horrible and inhuman living conditions of the Arab Moslems in the country. Today the numbers of these Arabs are less than half a million.

From any angle, whether you are an ally of Israel, an innocent bystander or a critic, you will be prompted to make many bitter comments on the unhygienic state and misery of the Arabs. The whole deplorable set-up defies description. I visited five remote Arab villages and settlements and most of what I saw sickened me.

As Mrs. Golda Meir told me, 'tourists are usually not encouraged to visit Arab settlements'. I was made to understand that this was because 'these Arabs are violent and dislike being paraded before tourists'. In my opinion this reason is inadequate.

I remember raising this particular point with an Israeli acquaintance, Mr. Elizier Matalon. He was the Vice-Consul of his country in Sydney, Australia, where I met him. He

was rather unhappy at the question and took a hostile attitude. He had this to say in reply:

'A free-thinking man will not say that the Arabs in Israel are living in such bad conditions as you say. Only a communist will say so.'

I was astounded at his comment. I asked him if he really meant that my pointing this out made me a communist.

'Please do not misunderstand me. I am not suggesting that you are a communist.'

In an extract from the last chapter of his book *A Study of History* the celebrated British historian and philosopher, Arnold Toynbee, has this to say on Israel's injustice to the Arabs:

'That any Jews should inflict on a third party some of the very wrongs that Jews have suffered at Western hands is a portent that makes one wonder. ... '

Let me unfold some of my observations on the condition of the Arabs in Israel. My disclosures are obviously critical, but they are not meant to disparage my Israeli readers.

On the eve of my journey from Jerusalem to the other parts of Israel I struck up a conversation with a middle-aged Arab Moslem. It was a chance meeting in a cafe called The Alaska on Jaffa Road. It was an unbearably cold night. The desert

wind had found its way over the hills, enveloped Jerusalem and transformed it into a bitingly chilly place.

I had gone into the cafe to regain my strength over a cup of strong, black coffee after I had been assaulted and beaten up for no reason by three drunken soldiers of the United Nations. The 'incident' happened outside Omar Khayyam, a night-club in the main square of the town. It was apparent to me then that the husky soldiers were looking for action, the type of action they could not find on the Israeli-Arab frontier.

As I sat down dejectedly in the cafe, pampering my swollen face with soothing ointment, I noticed through the glass window the ascetic face of a bearded man who was curiously watching me from outside. By the heavy turban on his head I knew he was an Arab. He was the first I had seen in the five days I had been in New Jerusalem.

On the spur of the moment I had the urge to talk to him. I went after him. He was already walking slowly away from the window when I caught up with him. I found that to speak to him I needed no interpreter, nor even my halting Arabic. He spoke English quite well.

"I was working for the English officers in the old days,' he confided. He was tall, dirtily clad, with a handsome face.

'How would you like to come into the cafe with me for a cup of coffee if you are not in a hurry?' I enquired.

'No, I am not in a hurry. But can you tell me who you are?' he demanded.

He was surprised at my identity, and fascinated by the fact that I was an African.

'I see, you would be the first African I have seen. I am an Arab Bedouin, but I am now living in Taiba village. It is an Arab village on the way to Haifa.'

'I think we had better go inside the cafe as it is rather cold out here,' I suggested.

Arab: 'But I cannot go into a Jewish restaurant.' 'Why is that, if I may ask?'

Arab: 'You see, we Arabs in Israel are forbidden to go into any Jewish restaurant or hotel. We are not even allowed to wander about on our own in any of the Jewish cities.'

'But you are in a city now.'

Arab: 'Yes, I know that. I was escorted into Jerusalem this afternoon by two Jewish military police. I have come to buy some food and equipment for the people of my village.'

'But where are the officers now?'

Arab: 'That is a long story. When it became dark I pretended to look for a toilet in the railway station at Abutor and escaped.'

'Why did you do that? Won't that land you in real trouble with them when they catch up with you?'

He told me that there was no chance of them catching up with him, as he would 'escape' before morning into the desert. 'That is my real home. I have relatives near Beersheba.'

I managed to convince him to come into the cafe with

me.
'I will take responsibility for whatever happens

inside,' I assured him. He was very reluctant.

As soon as we entered the cafe I knew I was wrong and he was right about his suspicion and fear. He was ordered out by the manageress, a grey-haired woman.

'But the gentleman is with me. I do hope it is no trouble to you.'

She had a gloomy and unfriendly face. The eyes of all the customers were focussed with contempt and disgust on the Arab and myself.

'Pay no attention to them. Just feel comfortable,' I advised him encouragingly.

Over cups of coffee he told me more about himself. 'The plight of my Arab brothers in our land is something too bad and inhuman even to talk about.'

He went on to say that he and the members of his tribe were shipped like a herd of goats from Beersheba and taken to a remote area where there was no farm and the land was not fertile.

'We live in camps, tents and broken houses, surrounded by barbed wire.

Please visit the place. It is called Taiba village and you will have many difficulties in arriving there. There are more than 8,000 Arabs.'

'But can I go there alone without having trouble with your Arab friends?' I asked.

'No trouble with my people. They will like you, but you must be careful for the Jewish police you will find there,' he warned.

I was about to order two more cups of coffee when four Israeli military police walked into the cafe and made directly for our table. Two had pistols strapped to their waists, while the others had rifles slung around their shoulders.

My Arab companion became jittery, and shivered at their appearance. The cup of coffee which he had picked up to sip before the soldiers entered, fell and made a mess of the table.

One of the soldiers engaged the Bedouin in Hebrew conversation. I watched intently as words flooded from their mouths in quick succession.

I saw the Arab dig one of his hands into a hidden pocket and fish out a document. It looked like his identity card. As he handed over the document to the soldiers, who looked as if they were his captors, I could see that his photo was on it. The men were now examining the card as I watched the Arab. He was petrified, his face rigid with fright.

'What is the trouble, my friend?' I asked. There was no reply. He gazed at me, then instantly glanced back at the men.

The army officer who had been doing all the talking was now through examining the document. He pocketed it and put his hand on his pistol. He wanted the Arab to go along with them into the street.

'Sirs, I just want to tell you that this gentleman is with me. He is here on my invitation.'

The rather young, well-mannered officer said: 'I am sorry, we would just like to have a word with him outside. We know him and he knows us.'

'I am sorry too, but he is stopping with me tonight at my place. You can finish your conversation here. You and your men can join us for coffee.'

He refused my offer. The cafe was by this time tense and quiet. The customers and the manageress watched the proceedings calmly. Sudden excitement on the part of the military officers changed the atmosphere.

The same officer said a few words in Hebrew to his men, and they moved forward and forcibly grabbed the Arab, threatening him with their weapons.

I picked up my camera and focussed it on the struggling group. The lighting inside the café was bad, this I realized. Funnily enough, at a shout from one of the men, 'Watch out, he's got a camera,' all of the soldiers quickly covered their faces with raised arms and made for the door, leaving the Arab behind. It was like a scene from a cops-and-robbers film.

We were sure that the soldiers would be waiting for my companion in the street. I was wrong. A few minutes before

the cafe was to close the manageress came to our table and handed the Arab his identity card. I was surprised that she should have it.

It was my turn to examine the document. On it his name was legibly printed: 'Abdul Mohammed Ilahi'.

I took him on the pillion of my motor-scooter and went to the university campus where I was staying. We talked all night.

18 *Visits to Arab Villages in Israel*

WHEN I was in the Arab states I sought and received answers to every question which had puzzled me about the Middle East and its people, and I was satisfied with the answers. At least, so I thought, until I came to Israel.

Here I discovered my ignorance, and found that I did not know as much as I had thought about the Arabs.

In Israel I became aware that there exists, besides the Arab, Jew, Moslem and Christian, another Arab religious sect. This is the Arab Druze.

What awed me about these Israeli Arabs was the deep hatred and contempt felt by the Arab Moslem for the Arab Druze and vice versa. In dress and features they have a striking resemblance. Normally you cannot tell one from the other.

An Israeli Arab Moslem will tell you, 'The Druze is a stooge who always spies on Moslems for the Israeli Government, because he wants the Jews to send his son to study in the university.' You ask the Arab Druze why he hates the sight of the Moslem. He tells you: 'I have more confidence and

trust in the Jews than the Moslems. The moment I turn my back on one of them he will stick a dagger in it. We never mix with them.'

Two of the five Arab villages I visited in Israel were Taiba, inhabited by Moslems, and Isofiya, by the Druzes. Before I relate my impression of both villages I should like to examine with the reader the cultural and religious background of the Druze.

An Arab Druze, like his Moslem counterpart, is a likeable but strange individual. As the recognized Druze leader of Isofiya told me: 'The Arab Druzes as a religious tribe can only be found on Mount Carmel in Israel and in no other part of the world. We were driven out of Syria thousands of years ago by the Moslems.'

The religious institution of the Druzes was founded in the eleventh century in Syria, from where it penetrated into the other parts of the Middle East. In the eighteenth century, as a result of what some historians call inter-communal strife, many believers of this religion were exiled to the Jebel Druze and Mount Carmel. Their occupation is farming.

They are usually attired in the same sort of long garments as the Arab Moslems, and wear long beards and turbans. Their spoken and written language is Arabic. I found that the Druze, unlike the Moslem, does not practise polygamy. His place of worship, which I visited when I went to Isofiya, is

of simple architecture and is square-shaped.

Inside, the arrangement lacked religious decorations or emblems. It was difficult for me to make out where I was, and whether I was visiting a synagogue, mosque or church. Somehow I had the feeling that it was a combination of all three houses of worship.

'Our faith and worship is a mixture of Mohammedanism, Judaism and Christianity. All three have one root. We join all of them together.'

This was the second comment the leader of the village made to me. He had seen the puzzled expression on my face as we walked out of the place, and felt obliged to give me this explanation.

The average Druze I met, compared with a Moslem, was better educated, better dressed and spoke Hebrew and English quite well.

Isofiya village has better housing and farming, and much cleaner streets, than Taiba. Also, unlike most of the Arab Moslem villages, there is electricity and fresh-water pumps, while the streets are named and houses numbered.

Another contrast I found is that Druzes enlist in the Israeli military and police services while Moslems cannot be found in either government service.

In the administration of Israel's Radio Jerusalem, where I worked briefly as an announcer, I noticed that not a single Arab Moslem is employed in any capacity. Most of the programmes in Arabic, beamed to Middle East listeners, were manned by Arabic-speaking Jews and Druzes.

I suggested to one of the executive of the radio station, Mr. Dan Avney: 'Wouldn't it be a good idea for your Arab programme producers to utilize as announcers the services of well-informed Arab Moslems in Israel? Such Moslems could refute the accusation made against Israel by the Arab states that the Moslems in Israel are ill-treated and oppressed. That is, of course, if it is not true.'

Dan Avney, an impressive, understanding and candid fellow, replied: 'You do have a point there. One or two of them do work for us as temporary part-time news analysts. We do not believe in using Radio Jerusalem as an instrument of propaganda, or for the exchange of bitter words with the Arab leaders.'

Dan and I could not see eye to eye after I returned to Jerusalem and told him that I was disturbed by the shocking conditions in Taiba village, populated by more than 8,000 Arabs.

Before making the trip, a thorough search for the name "Taiba village' on six different Israeli-made maps did not indicate its location. The most authoritative of all the maps, "Touring Map of Israel', was of no assistance either.

However, with the help of a twelve-year-old Arab boy, whom I met on the main road, halfway between Jerusalem and Haifa, I found my way to the village.

It was thirty-five miles off the main highway, over a dusty, stony road.

The general condition of the village was disgusting. Barbed wire encircled the entire place. The first impression I got was that of a bombed area, neglected and uninhabited. Yet human beings lived here.

There was no fresh-water pump, clinic or even an elementary school. The narrow lanes of the village, not proper streets, were untarred. Not a single dwelling had electricity. Falling and dilapidated houses with leaking roofs dominated the scene.

I saw dirty, naked children playing a game of hide-and-seek as they dashed from one house to another. Here was a sight of horror and poverty at its worst.

While the narrow pathways were covered with stones and mud, the only presentable building in the village was the newly built military police station. Lingering on its steps were a number of Arabs, over whom stood Israeli soldiers, brandishing rifles.

An ageing, leading member of the community, whose name I cannot disclose, unhappily commented: 'Before we were

brought here most of us were living in our own homes and on farms in the richer parts of Palestine. Then the Jews captured our land and here we are, living like cows. Our mosques were burnt to the ground by the Jews. Our houses were destroyed and valuable property was confiscated. We became homeless and helpless.'

The wrinkle-faced Arab went on to tell me: 'Today we are living on the border of starvation, not knowing where our next meal will come from. Sometimes we wonder if there is truly an Allah. He is certainly not answering our prayers against the Jews.' The tragedy of his plight showed on his face as he talked to me.

'Don't you get compensation and assistance from the Israeli Government now?' I asked.

'Assistance?' he repeated. 'The Jews have never given us any help, instead they always make things difficult for us. We can't use the land around here for farming, and the police watch us all the time.'

He told me that they were not allowed to visit other villages or see their relatives around them.

'Special permission is needed from the police before anyone can leave the village to buy food. We also have to be accompanied by two Jewish policemen into the city when we have any reason to go there.'

I thought it deplorable that these people had to live under these oppressive conditions, different from any I had seen in other parts of Israel. Here was what one might call an act of treachery by man against man.

There are two conclusions I have reached for what I consider might be the justification of the Israeli Government in its neglect of the medical, social and educational welfare of these Moslem Arabs.

It could be a punitive action against the Arabs. This might be retaliation for the hostility and bitter hatred shown by the surrounding Arab states to Israel.

Secondly, the state of Israel, alone, is at war with more than fourteen Moslem Arab nations. For the Israelis to give freedom of movement to the Moslems living among them would amount to signing their own death warrant. And as the Arab Moslems in Israel could not be trusted, for fear that they might engage in espionage and thereby do irreparable damage, their movements must be regulated and restricted.

These reasons, if my assumptions are correct, remain inconclusive yet they cannot be condoned. Better treatment of the Arabs by the Israelis would indicate to everyone that the Israeli Government is earnestly looking for a peaceful solution to the unhappy state of affairs which exists between itself and the Arab states. I believe that this should be the

first step by Israel to get out of her present unpleasant impasse.

19 *Exit: Israel into Lebanon by Road*

IT WAS about 4 a.m. on a Monday. The weather over troubled Jerusalem was misty. It was not a particularly pleasant morning. The Holy Land and its people were still very much asleep. Except for the dreary faces of the homeless, the streets were unusually calm and peaceful, almost lifeless.

After two months I was on my way out of Israel and Jerusalem and was making for Lebanon by road.

From Beirut I would catch the first boat to Egypt. This achieved, my next stop would be Iraq. So I was planning on that morning, as I set out from Jerusalem on my Lambretta. The scooter was by now showing some signs of strain on the hilly road. Even so, I felt that it would get me across the explosive Israeli- Arab border.

From the very first day that Israel became a state the border was closed, even to stray goats. Before I came along no one was known to have crossed from one side of the frontier to the other.

Many innocent shepherds grazing their sheep and cattle were known to have lost their lives in this area—no-man'sland. They were shot by either Arab or Israeli guards, and not by accident. It was a strictly taboo border-area and I was bound for Beirut through it. I was not feeling particularly optimistic or cheerful. Neither was I really afraid.

Two days before my departure from Jerusalem my friend Dan Avney, with whom I was working at Radio Jerusalem, had thrown a party in my honour. We shared a table with a couple of the guests, including George Wigoder.

Dan, after filling my glass with wine, started a discussion. As usual he was in a reserved mood. His every word was distinctly pronounced in a quiet and pleasant way. This night he was impeccably dressed in a dark blue suit. He had on a grey tie with a Windsor knot. In appearance Dan is lean, handsome and I guess to be in his early forties. He has one more quality: he is multi-lingual—French, English, Hebrew, Arabic and Italian—and speaks them all expertly.

'I am sure you will have no objection if I tell you one thing tonight,' he began.

'It all depends on what you have to say, Dan,' I contributed.

He took this as a discouraging answer. 'Now don't let us start any argument about the "conditions" of our Arabs. It's

got nothing to do with that.' He paused and helped me to another glass of wine.

'Well, I am listening to you, and I see George looks interested in what you have to say.'

As I said this, Scottish-born George Wigoder managed a smile on his boyish-looking face, which was topped by a shiny, balding head.

'About your going overland from Israel to Lebanon. We do not advise it.

The situation on that border is worse than the one from Jordan to Israel.'

'I will take my chances. If I am not being rude I would prefer to be the judge of that when I get to the place.'

He lifted up his wine.

'I'll tell you another thing you don't know, Bisie.' (He never could pronounce my full name correctly. Bisie was easier.)

'I am still with you, though I may not consider what you tell me.'

He gave a faint cough, and rather humorously suggested: 'I am a member of the Red Cross.

'Well, I am a member of the American House of Congress. So what?' I joked.

'Well, you will be doing a great service to the cause of medicine if you donate your blood to the Red Cross instead of spilling it all over no-man's-land. That is what is sure to happen to you if you go through with your plan.' He paused again to sip his wine. 'You will be shot on sight by the Arabs or our soldiers.'

As he said this the expression on his face was more serious than I had ever seen it. I knew he had a good point, but I was not outwardly showing it. There was sudden quietness around the table. George's face was expressionless. I changed the mood by bursting into sudden wild laughter, as if seeing only the joking aspects of his remarks. I did not want them to try to dissuade me any further.

It was three in the afternoon when I arrived on the Israeli side of the border. About twelve soldiers were on guard, while many others were scattered around the place. I saw a few also watching the frontier from the top of a nearby tower.

The colonel in charge of the area spoke kindly but affirmed that he would not let me cross because of danger to my life. When I insisted that I would crash my way through the military post he quickly summoned more of his men to the gate.

After a long haggle between us, which lasted about four hours, I succeeded in persuading him to get in touch with the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem.

'I can assure you that I have the verbal assurance of your office in Jerusalem. All you need to do is check this with them by telephone.'

It was two hours later when word came through. His office in Haifa had to contact Jerusalem.

If I was prepared to sign a document to the effect that I was going through the frontier against his advice, and at my own risk, I could continue without any further ado. This was agreeable to me.

The sector between the two borders was a rough five-mile stretch. I could see at a distance, on top of the hills and along the beaches, khaki-uniformed Arab soldiers with rifles trained on me as I drove slowly along the deserted and dusty road. I was calm as they signalled and shouted remarks to one another.

By this time I knew I was on Lebanese soil.

I was less than twenty-five yards from their post when a convoy of jeeps came towards me. Now I was really filled with panic. Soon soldiers swarmed from every direction.

One of the jeeps swerved and made an abrupt halt in front of me. I jammed my foot on the brake of my scooter.

'Where did you come from and where are you going?' a man in captain's uniform asked.

'I am coming from Haifa and am on my way to Beirut.'

'I am sorry, you must return where you came from,' he ordered.

'But I can't; the Israelis told me that I could not return to them once I came through here.'

'Well, that is your problem. You must go back with your scooter.

'Listen,' I said, rather apologetically, 'I am an African, not an Israeli. The trouble between the Arabs and the Israelis has nothing to do with an African. I believe in freedom of movement. If you Arabs want to make yourselves enemies of Africans that is your business.'

I alighted from the scooter. 'If you will not allow me to go through this border to Beirut then I will just have to put up my tent and stay here for the rest of my life.'

'You are crazy. Our patrol soldiers will kill you in the night because they will take you for a Jew. Be a nice man and go back quietly.'

I refused. I parked my scooter and unpacked my cooking utensils. They watched me curiously as I unfolded my tent and pitched it on the spot. In whispering voices they spoke together in Arabic. Every movement I made was attentively studied.

The English-speaking captain drove off in his jeep. A crowd of neatly dressed soldiers was still around me.

The time was then about 7 p.m. and I had some coffee and sandwiches. At about 8.30 the captain and a colonel returned and pleaded with me in a kindly tone to return to Israel.

'We shall help you pack your things and guide you to the Jewish border. Please try to understand us. We are only doing our job.'

I was adamant. They sauntered away, looking unhappy and murmuring to each other.

At about midnight two heavy military trucks arrived on the scene. I was in my tent thinking over what would eventually be my fate.

I was ordered to get my belongings together. I watched the soldiers as first they lifted my scooter into one of the trucks and then the rest of my things. I was not allowed to travel in the truck with my scooter.

'Now you are under arrest for trespassing,' the captain stated. He ordered me to get into the front seat of his jeep.

I was under the impression that they were taking me into detention on the border. I was wrong. We crossed the barrier post into Lebanon and passed several villages. We arrived in a place called Saida, about sixty-five miles from the border.

Saida, a strictly military town eighty-five miles from Beirut, was to become my place of detention for the next three days. I was kept to the military barracks and interrogated six times during my arrest. I was neither maltreated nor starved at any time. In fact I found myself very much at home among these Arab soldiers.

On the third morning of my detention I was accompanied by Company Sergeant-Major Ali Hijazi, and two military police to the general of the camp. He was a pleasant and friendly man.

'We are sure that you will understand why we detained you so long. We had to check your identity and if you had any bad motive for coming here from Israel. We shall release you

now and allow you to continue your travels to Beirut.'

I expressed my thanks to him, but not regret for what I had done. He was a bespectacled and dark-haired officer, who spoke rather good English.

'Good luck to you, and, please, when you return to Lebanon feel free to call on us. But don't come through the back door again. It is always securely shut and guarded against the infiltration of Zionist snipers.' After two weeks in Beirut I boarded a boat and

went to Egypt, where another kind of adventure was awaiting me.

This time Nasser himself came to my rescue.

PART SIX

EGYPT

20 *The Egyptians*

THE approach into Cairo, after I had scootered from Alexandria 200 miles on a narrow, curveless road bordered by an ocean of desert, was of stark ugliness. The whole atmosphere of its suburbs as I went through was reminiscent of the days I had spent among the squalor, filth and multitudes of flies of Calcutta.

My destination was Liberty Square (El Teherir) in the heart of the cosmopolitan section, from where a Malayan friend would guide me to the local youth hostel.

Any visitor at his first view of the outskirts of Cairo would look askance at their slums and poverty.

Here I saw what ought to be called a museum of faded and dilapidated buildings. Unhealthy open drains surround the derelict cane-and-straw shanties roofed with rusty car-body metal.

Further down in the direction of the Nile Bridge I found that unkempt, muddly little lanes constitute the main highway leading to the city. These were lanes and streets full of men and animals alike. Crippled or blind beggars were

here and there. Cows, camels, donkeys and goats were more or less lording it over the roads. Dirty, unclad children were running everywhere.

The elite of the slum district were young, handsome and well-groomed Egyptian spivs and narcotic pedlars. As I was later to find in the Cairo city area, one could easily tell them from their dress: flamboyant, multi-coloured shirts hanging loosely over snow-white, neatly pressed trousers and flaming red socks.

What somewhat subdued the revolting smells as I struggled through the crowd was the strong odour of heavily scented, long Egyptian joss-sticks.

Another fifteen minutes of slow scootering and I was in Cairo proper.

You get the inescapable impression that you are living back in the days of the Roman Empire. The whole place is some what ramshackle. I had to get off my scooter and drag it inch by inch, while edging my way through a milling sea of heads, until I emerged unscathed on to an open road.

It was here, for the first time, that a boy, not more than thirteen years old, accosted me.

Mister, I sell hashish [heroin] you. Many pounds only one American dollar.'

The Liberty Square where President Nasser often makes his violently fiery speeches against his Arab rivals—imperialism, Zionism and sometimes communism—is truly the only dazzling and revolutionary centre of Egypt, a landmark, and, above all, an inspiration to Nasser's nationalism for every Egyptian.

Surrounding Liberty Square are a number of tall, imposing and conspicuous buildings: the Hilton Cairo, probably the most modern hotel in the whole of Africa; the massive Revolution Building which houses all branches of the government administration; the elegantly styled Semiramis; a new thirty-two storey apartment house, and the Egyptian National Museum where one can see priceless antiques, gold-embroidered chairs and mosaics.

Metropolitan Cairo, with its sweltering heat, is not only a city partaking of past and present but is the most populated and largest city in the vast continent of Africa. It is a metropolis of all races: Arab, Negro, half- caste, Caucasian, Chinese, Indian and any other you may care to name. Egypt, inhabited by more than 27,000,000 people, mostly Arab and African Moslems, stands proudly as the bridge between Asia and Africa.

One will also find that, apart from Mecca and Medina, Cairo is the bastion of Islam and Islamic teachings, even more so today than in the past. The Nile, the longest river in Africa, with its combination of beauty and ugliness, cannot

be missed or ignored as you wander around this historic metropolis.

It would be unfair to say that Cairo is only a mixture of Arab and African heritage. It is more than just this. It embodies to a noticeable degree modern European, Latin American and Far East Asian characteristics.

Cairo is a city of extraordinarily continuous hustle and bustle. It was one of the first centres of the modern nationalism and political awakening which have suddenly spread over Africa and Asia. Among the many sights which cannot escape the visitor are those of veiled women in black attire, long robed vendors, doormen and the professional beggars, always at your back pleading, 'Baksheesh, master'.

The youth hostel where my Malayan friend had taken me was on Ibrahimi Street in the Garden City, known also as the diplomatic quarter of Cairo. From the hostel it is a few minutes' walk to the British and American embassies. The hostel is located practically on Liberty Square and only a few feet from the Nile Bridge and the Hilton Cairo, perched on the edge of the river.

On the day of my arrival I pointed out to my friend Hasan the three main things I planned to achieve in the next month of my visit to Egypt: interview Nasser, visit the Sphinx and Pyramids, and to to Mount Moses in the Sinai Desert, the place where Moses, according to the Bible, received the stone tablets on which were written the ten

commandments from God, and where he later smashed the same tablets.

My friend's comments on these plans were not encouraging.

'I see that you aim very high. You don't want to settle for ordinarily interesting places which are enough to make most tourists happy.'

'What's it matter whom and what I want to see?'

'Plenty of things are wrong with two of the three things you mentioned, and you haven't a chance of doing them.'

'Now, listen, wise guy, just what do you mean?' I asked, in a jocular manner.

'All this jazz about you wanting to see Nasser. Who in the hell do you think you are, a male version of Marilyn Monroe? You haven't got a chance, and all Cairo will tell you that.'

'Well, tell me also that I haven't got a chance to visit Mount Moses because it is now the Bank of England.'

He laughed, stroking his thin beard.

'It is not my place to tell you about the difficulty you will experience. When you go and apply for a pass from the

police they will tell you that you can't go there.

'You are more than a tourist here, Hasan, you are an authority on Egypt.'

He took this as a compliment and gracefully bowed his head to me.

I added, 'And in as much as you are an authority, maybe you will not care to tell me the reason why I will not be permitted to go to Mount Moses.'

'Sure I will tell you. I have been through all this rigmarole myself and I got nowhere.

"The police will not give you a permit to go to Mount Moses; unless, of course, you give them baksheesh. . ..

'But you have not told me any of their reasons for refusing you permission.'

'If you will give me a chance to speak and finish what I have to say, instead of cutting into my sentences, I might tell you.' He paused.

Hasan was a skinny, dark-skinned Malayan with a neat moustache and a small well-kept beard. He had hitch-hiked all the way from Kuala Lumpur and was now on his way to London, where he hoped to join the Royal Air Force. He

was eighteen years old and always looked hungry.

'There are two reasons. Sinai, where this place is situated, is a restricted military area. This was where the Jews fought with the Egyptians in 1949, when many people were slaughtered. Now no one is allowed there except soldiers.'

He reached for his hair-comb.

'You have been to Israel, and if they should find that out you will be a dead duck once you show your face at Sinai or at a police station.'

'What is the second reason?'

'Around Mount Moses, where you have St. Catherine's Orthodox Monastery, you will find hashish growers, pedlars and smoking-dens. You need only visit them for ten minutes and you can bring away with you tons of hashish and take it across to Suez. The next thing you know you are a millionaire, especially if you make it across to West Cairo.'

'What has all this racket to do with my going there?'

'I wouldn't go to the place for the stuff myself, but the police don't believe anyone. You just won't be allowed to get that far.'

He told me that he could go with me to Aswan and many other interesting sites in Egypt without trouble. I was not

interested in Aswan. The following day we went to El Gizeh to see the Sphinx and the Pyramids, and for the time being I shelved my other ambitions.

It was very early in the morning when we set out from the Garden City for the Pyramids and the Sphinx. We had to arrive at the place early in the morning in order to capture the light of the sun on the Sphinx's face. Arrival on the spot any later than 7 a.m. would show one side of the face partly enveloped in shadow.

The road from the city passed through a number of slums, and became dustier as we went on. We came to El Gizeh, with its dirt, its smells of domestic animals on sale and big market place with tons of vegetables and other foodstuffs.

To reach the site of the Pyramids we proceeded further on through the desert and came to a brown, sandy road. It was lined by tall trees. From here the Pyramids looked to us like miniature versions of themselves. The closer we came, the more we felt the magnificence and gigantic structure. Soon they towered over us.

There were nine pyramids, all about the same shape but of different sizes. The greatest and largest is Cheops. It is reputed to be the largest monument anywhere in the world.

We moved over to see the great Sphinx. It is less than six minutes away by camel. These camels can always be hired from their ageing Egyptian owners, who are all around the

area. The road leading to it is dusty, rough and hilly. As we went along we were harried by beggars, pseudo historian guides, camel- drivers, postcard-sellers and heroin pedlars. Like a herd of sheep, they followed us about and endeavoured to force their services on us.

The colossal Sphinx has a strange, majestic appearance seen from any angle. It looks like some kind of ancient goddess. It has a great fascination which remains with you even after you have left the place for good. Its bodily form of a crouched lion with a human head represents something that no historian has been able to establish. The origin of its name is attributed to the Greeks, as they felt that it had some relation to the legend of the monster from which Oedipus delivered Thebes. The Arabs, of course, have another name for it, Abu Haul—Father of Terror.

The striking figure stands 75 feet tall, while its imposing body measures 150 feet in length. The sullen face alone is the size of a fully grown man.

We had lunch at famous Mena House, not far from the village of Nazlet el Siman, a short distance from the Sphinx. Our whole day had been spent in the area.

The following day we made for the two universities in Cairo. First we saw the courtyard and interior of Al Azhar University, which is known to be the oldest existing university in the world. The students are usually dressed in long white togas topped by the typical Arab black dress of

galabiya. They are both of the same size and length. These students are taught in Arabic and are looked upon as authorities on the Koran, which they come to know inside out.

Al Azhar was originally built as a mosque in A.D. 971 by the Viceroy Gohar. Twenty years later it was transformed into both a mosque and an Islamic university, specializing in Moslem theology and philosophy. Its towering domes and minarets occupy a whole section of Cairo and it can be viewed from practically any part of the city. Inside it is picturesque. There are nine aisles and its wide courtyard is lined by several long corridors and arcades. There are hundreds of Moslem students from all over the world, including American Negroes who have accepted Islam.

The second university is the seat of modern learning and offers its students curricula in as many branches of education as one could find at Yale or Oxford universities. Again, teaching is carried out in Arabic, despite the fact that the textbooks are mostly in English, Arabic, French and German.

Hasan went along with me to Africa House to meet some young African political nationalists and students who had left their countries at the risk of their lives. Here in Africa House we chatted with a number of them, from South Africa, Kenya, Angola and other parts of Africa.

Africa House is a big building in a select area of the city. Its complicated and solemn interior and spacious lecture room give you the impression that you are walking through the hall of the United Nations Office in miniature. There is a conglomeration of rooms marked 'Kenya Political Adviser', 'South African Government in Exile', 'Uganda Trade Office', 'Nigerian Advisory Board', 'South West African Affairs' and so on. Each room is about twelve feet square.

I remember that when I wanted to read the latest newspapers from Nigeria, Cairo's Ministry of Information directed me to the Nigeria Office in Africa House. The place, I was told, was run, furnished and personally financed by President Nasser through one of his Ministries.

The most interesting and likeable set of people in Cairo I met were the black-skinned Egyptians. They are scrupulously honest and dependable. This people, known as *Sudanischek Farashin*, are usually doormen, labourers and servants and can be found as minor government functionaries. Despite their low prestige and employment in odd jobs, I did not find a single beggar among them. Tall, handsome and helpful, they enjoy a certain amount of respect and admiration in the eyes of tourists.

The Egyptians, especially the young set, can be strange and unpredictable. One evening as I was walking alone along Pasha Suleiman Avenue, the Broadway of Cairo, I saw two young lads of about twelve years engaged in what looked like a fist-fight. They were clutching each other's throat,

tearing their clothes and lunging at each other ferociously. Their noses were almost touching.

I walked up to them in an effort to be a peace maker. As I lay my hand on one of them in order to separate him from his antagonist, they both suddenly parted and burst into laughter. I became the object of fun and ridicule for the two boys. They were not fighting, just having fun. I walked away, feeling foolish.

21 *The Birth and Origin of Islam*

IT IS a common sight in Cario to see an Egyptian taxi-driver halt his car unceremoniously in the middle of the main street, get out and walk to the rear of the car, praying solemnly in Moslem fashion. Wherever he happens to be at any hour he must pray five times each day. Women are forbidden to pray in the streets and in certain mosques meant only for men.

The history and practice of the Islamic faith is worth exploring briefly.

The ritual of complete cleanliness before sitting down to pray is interesting to watch. The ritual involves the thorough washing of the hands, head, ears, face, nostrils, mouth, arms and feet. All this washing is strictly observed, using clean tap water, rain or spring water, cold or warm.

On Fridays, the Moslem holy day, every mosque in town is full to overflowing with people wearing their 'Sunday' best, dressed in colourful robes.

Usually a learned old man with a greying beard is at the head of the congregation. Whatever he does, speaks or acts

is flawlessly repeated after him. His voice is distinctly heard all over the grand and spacious mosque, sometimes with the help of a microphone.

He raises his hands to his forehead and then to his sides. He gracefully bows from the waist, stands erect again and then kneels flexibly. He gently presses his face to the ground, his forehead, nose and lips touching it, and murmurs some Arabic words from the Koran. Soon he sits up and engages in a long recital of quotations from the Koran. The whole congregation repeats the words after him. At the end he loudly exclaims, *'Aaa-Salaam Alikun.'*

The congregation repeats this and the ritual is over. Everybody disperses. Throughout the process of the solemn prayers or at any time in a mosque, during which you must have your head covered, no one is allowed to have his shoes on. Out of curiosity I went to such a mosque one Friday but returned home without my shoes. They were not misplaced. They just vanished.

About one-sixth of the world's population belongs to the Islamic faith, founded by Mohammed, who is regarded as the true prophet of Allah. How he came to be a delegated spokesman and the approved prophet of Allah no one really knows.

However, history tells us the story of his birth, life and the origin of his religion, which so far have not been disputed.

Mohammed was born in Mecca in the sixth century A.D. His father died before he was born. A few years after his birth his mother also died. He was adopted and raised by his uncle, a man of poor means. When Mohammed reached manhood he went out to live with the Bedouins in the desert. Here he perfected himself in the Arabic language. He moved about with Bedouins in caravans of camels and engaged in trade by barter in the Middle East.

He married a woman of wealth, known as Khadija. She was fifteen years older than Mohammed. They had a daughter, Fatima.

In that era every Arab worshipped some kind of an idol, most of which have been traced to the heart of Africa. Mohammed, a likeable, kindly individual, chose a black stone in Mecca to represent his faith and beliefs. He and his wife Khadija were devout worshippers of this stone, which Mohammed insisted was not an idol in the same sense as others believed.

It is established that Mohammed had much contact with Jews and Christians in the course of his trade by barter and his travels round the Middle East. Soon he won the sympathy and confidence of many admirers, most of whom came to believe in his black stone as of sacred and religious significance. Mohammed, with his many disciples, organized revolts against other idol-worshippers, particularly pagans. He succeeded in his mission, stating that there is only one Allah who created the world, man and

all the objects around him. He made it his duty to overrun paganism and replace it with the belief and worship of Allah.

He went alone for meditation into the wilderness for days in order to receive Allah's divine messages and guidance, which were later compiled into the Moslem Koran. This is known as the 'Bible' of the Moslems. In contrast to Christ, Mohammed was cautious not to label himself singularly as the "Son of Allah'. However, he claimed that he was a divine prophet.

His fame soon spread out of Mecca into the adjacent towns and villages, not as a conductor of caravans any more, but as a prophet. Friends who had known and traded with him soon rallied around and he became accepted as their religious leader. Because of jealousy by the authorities of the day, Mohammed and some of his disciples were confined within the walls of Mecca. He was later released, as he was now becoming famous and his detention was creating unrest among his multitudes of admirers.

When released, he went to Medina, not far from Mecca. Here he made more converts and openly engaged in the preaching of his beliefs. From Medina he travelled to other remote places all over North Africa, and the Middle East as far as Persia.

In the process he formulated the laws of his belief. He forbade stealing, adultery and lying. He had no objection to

any of his followers having more than one wife, and set the limit at four. This, one must say, gained him more followers among men than women.

His followers believe that Mohammed was the latest prophet of Allah. He is known to have had a great admiration for Jesus. In the Koran references are often made to Christ, the Virgin Mary and particularly to Abraham. After his death his devout disciples engaged in converting pagans by ruthlessness, intimidation and threats. In this way they penetrated into Africa south of the Sahara and to Far East Asia, brandishing their sharp-edged swords. A Moslem who dies in battle for his faith is supposed to go directly to Paradise, a great incentive to warlike adventures.

'Islam' was the word used by Mohammed to denote his faith. In Arabic this means 'submission'— devoted and unswerving submission to the will and work of Allah.

The book of the Koran itself embraces five cardinal principles which must be followed and obeyed by every good Moslem. These are: there is no other god but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet; the ritual of prayer to Allah must be carried out five times a day; fasting from dawn to dusk for thirty days during the period of Ramadan each year is compulsory; the distribution of alms to the poor is made when you can afford it; pilgrimage to Mecca when and if possible is the highest point of a Moslem's life.

Today in Mecca the sacred black stone remains a rallying place for devout Moslems who make a holy pilgrimage to Mecca each year. Any Moslem who travels thousands of miles to reach Mecca at a certain time of the year must first camp outside the city. He clothes himself in two sacred white cotton garments (white sheets). Bareheaded and without shoes, he makes for the central mosque in the heart of Mecca. Except for his white garment, he could easily be taken for a Buddhist monk.

This completed, he instantly becomes an 'Alhaji' or, if a female, an 'Alhaja'—a devout Moslem and a recognized disciple of Mohammed.

22 *Changing Egypt*

A SCRUTINY of Nasser's socio-autocratic government shows that it is neither a facade for Arab nationalism nor an anti-Jewish instrument. Of course, Nasser defies and is very outspoken against Zionism, and what he calls the 'reactionary agents'.

It is often said that he is a dictator, but this is too strong a term, despite his one-party government. Nasser prefers group politics to a multi-party system, and therefore he demolished all three leading political parties when his regime took over the country from General Neguib.

On the other hand, his authoritarian government is nowhere near democratic. It is a cross between an autocratic and a socialistic regime. In this respect Ben- Gurion's Israel has more of a truly socialistic government than Nasser's Egypt.

At the time of writing there exists in Egypt a sort of political body championed by Nasser himself, the Socialist Union. It comprises mostly workers, peasants, farmers, professionals, Civil Servants and so on, men and women alike. Feudal

landlords and property-owners have been conspicuously excluded.

This Socialist Union in turn produced, at the direction of Nasser, a new Presidential Council, to which the Cabinet is subordinate. The proceedings of the organizations, usually presided over by Nasser, are made public through the medium of television, radio and newspapers. I saw one such meeting on television.

It is widely known that the overall management of the country is delegated by Nasser to this newly formed Presidential Council. He made it quite explicit to his Cabinet and Council members that he is open to criticism and that the country will now have a much more flexible government than was known in the past. This attitude in itself is uniquely different from that of past authoritarian regimes.

For whatever motives it was initiated, Nasser's brand of socialism in the past five years has achieved startling results, mostly in the economic field. We have, for example, the able and efficient management of the Suez Canal after it was wrested from Britain and the foreign engineers rapidly replaced by Egyptians. We have co-operatives, agrarian reform programmes, fertilizers, seed and farm machinery for the farmers. On top of this, credit is given to the farmers to help them carry out their projects. The government is making sure that enough money is spent on maintaining a

continuous flow of drinkable water to remote villages.

Education is playing a primary role in the reformation, despite the tough impediments and handicaps. Nasser believes, from what I could gather when I talked to university students, that mass education is the surest means of combating social ignorance, poor hygiene and of securing the full industrialization of the country.

'Our President does not believe that, like Red China and Russia, heavy industry should come before food and education. Sufficient food and mass education are our main targets first. Later we can worry about the others.'

The same student pointed out that 65% of Egyptian children are now in schools, compared with, say, ten years ago, when there were less than 23% being educated.

The immense economic reconstruction is calling for a concentrated effort by the government, and Nasser realizes this. The income from the Suez Canal, for example, is relieving the situation to a large extent.

There are more hospitals, housing projects, clinics, schools and other institutions which the government believes will eradicate poverty and ignorance, and, with them, contagious diseases. So the living conditions of the masses should be directly improved. Slums are being cleared for giant apartment houses.

Another equally successful achievement is the Russian-financed Aswan Dam. When completed in 1969 it will be the largest dam in the world. It is expected to reclaim over 1,000,000 acres of arid land and almost triple the nation's electricity output. Its construction is also expected to alleviate unemployment in Egypt.

While Nasser's regime is battling against poverty, unemployment and illiteracy, it is also giving Egyptians a sense of confidence, national prestige and pride. After some 2,000 years of foreign domination this is not an easy achievement. Nasser believes that there should be no dependence on foreign imports. 'Buy Egyptian' appears to be his latest motto.

The Egyptians are themselves manufacturing everything from rockets to tinned food. Apart from the export of cotton, they are looking for markets abroad for local products, which include small cars, weapons, cooking-utensils, toys, radio and even television sets.

In spite of all its advances, not everything is spick-and-span in the government. A menacing social institution and disgrace which Nasser has not yet succeeded in destroying is the trade in hashish. On practically any street in Cairo a tourist can easily procure as much raw or refined marihuana and heroin as he wants. You need only exchange a few words with your taxi-driver, cigarette-pedlar, or even shoe-shine boy, and you are in business.

Hashish plays a tremendous role in the life of Egyptians of every class, particularly among its youth. The government does not appear to be doing anything to combat this social disease, although it does not condone its practice.

Many young people who cannot afford real hashish know just what to do in order to get another kind of drug, which is just as effective. They simply boil for several hours the liquid from ordinary tea- leaves. The resultant mixture produces an artificially stimulating effect which gives as much, if not more, satisfaction as hashish itself. One is sure to get 'high' and be 'sent' on top of the world.

It is to be hoped that Nasser will personally undertake the destruction of this terrible drug plague which so surely saps the energy and willpower of many of the younger generation.

What I would call the show place of modern Egypt is Liberation Province. This consists of many acres of irrigated desert land west of the delta. Here I saw a number of ambitious and revolutionary projects which make the desert habitable and agriculturally viable. There are, I was told, 400 such settlements and villages all over the country. They serve two purposes: to relieve the terrible congestion of the population and to increase agricultural output.

One such project is Inchass, the 2,000-acre settlement which was once the property of King Farouk. The area has been laboriously irrigated and cultivated, and is now settled

mostly by peasants. Houses have been built in groups of four to encourage a co-operative systen of farming and ownership. Co- operation is used in practically everything, from the planting of seeds and harvesting to the joint marketing of produce.

In each village one finds a clinic, hospital and shopping centre. A doctor will call on such villagers as are unable to go to him. These projects amount to a great land reform, on property mostly confiscated from rich owners. Peasants, formerly poverty-stricken, are benefiting most from this programme.

Nasser's socialism appears to have little use for the Islamic religion, although it is tremendously respected and given its traditional place, but much greater emphasis is placed, as in Western countries, on scientific knowledge and experiment. Nasser is known, for example, to advocate birth-control in order to curb the soaring population of his people. However, the strength of Islam is not used as a pretext to campaign against any other religious sect in Egypt.

The strangest thing I noticed was than an Egyptian-born Jew is neither scorned, abhorred nor despised for his religious belief. Considering Nasser's violent and almost fanatical hatred for Israel and for Zionism, this calls for an examination.

In the other Arab states I had visited it was not common for me to meet a Jewish business man or shopkeeper, or to see a

Jewish synagogue, school or hospital. In Egypt today it is quite common to meet Jewish shopkeepers. I was astonished to find myself being treated for an injury in a Jewish hospital in Egypt. I later visited a synagogue.

Unexpectedly, Nasser's government is not anti- Jewish, although it is fervently opposed to Zionism. When Nasser came to power many Greek, French, Italian and foreign business men, including small shopkeepers and theatre owners, were deprived of their properties and businesses, and booted out of the country, some without any form of compensation. However, Egyptian Jews were left almost completely unmolested.

When I was in Alexandria, staying at a private house, there was a Jewish hospital next door. Two blocks away from the hospital I paid a visit to a synagogue. The medical director of the hospital pointed out to me that such Jewish hospitals and synagogues could also be found in Cairo and other parts of Egypt.

'We Jews in Egypt do not feel that we are being persecuted or deprived of our rights as human beings,' he said.

I asked the director if the hospital was controlled and subsidized by the government, as in the case of other hospitals.

'Not exactly; our is privately run, but, of course, there is a certain amount of intrusion into our affairs by the government. This we expect and it is not really bad.'

'Could you tell the government here that you would like to leave Egypt and go to Israel?' I asked.

'I can leave Egypt any time. I need only pretend that I am going to Europe. They know where you are going when you say that. They don't seem to have any objection, unless you are suspected of political intrigue and espionage. Then you can be sure of long imprisonment, if not death.'

In Alexandria I was the house guest of a naval officer. When I asked him to take me to visit the Jewish hospital he was unwilling.

'You see, I am an official of the government and in a strategic position.' He added, in an effort to clarify his country's stand on Judaism: 'We are not against the Jews. They are human beings and a religious group like us. Like the Jews, we Moslems believe in the same God. But we are opposed to Zionism, and Zionism stands for Israel and Ben-Gurion.'

He went on to say: 'These Zionists are land- grabbers. They drove more than a million Arabs from Palestine and changed its name to Israel. The Jews in Egypt are just as good as the ones you will find in New York, London or

Paris. They don't bother us, we don't bother them.'

No matter how much one may despise or admire Nasser, either as a trouble-shooter or as the father of Arab nationalism, one must agree that he is progressive in thought, action and ideology. He has brought vast improvements to his domain, and uprooted much corruption and inefficiency. He is giving courage and determination, as well as pride and honour, to his people.

Talk to practically any Egyptian about Nasser and you will hear the most prevalent view: 'Nasser is our father. He has changed our way of life for a better one. We would die for him if necessary.'

It is obvious that no one could, at present, openly challenge the authority and position of Gamal Abdul Nasser.

23 *Incident in Cairo*

EXACTLY two weeks after my arrival in Cairo the unexpected happened. On the premises of an elite sports and social club along the Nile I was ganged-up on and thoroughly beaten into an unconscious state by some of the members. The bloody injuries I sustained on the occasion not only landed me in hospital, where I was confined for three days, but resulted in my arrest and deportation from Egypt to Syria after my release from hospital.

My deportation to Syria turned out to be of fatal disadvantage to the Egyptian authorities. It made possible my meeting with Nasser in Damascus, where he was paying a month's official state visit. I related to him in full detail the savage treatment I had received in Cairo. What infuriated Nasser above all, after he had heard my story, was the fact that I was deported from Egypt. He ordered a special military aircraft to return me to Cairo with my scooter. I was booked into the Hilton Cairo and received red-carpet treatment.

Gezira Country Club, as it was then known, was a luxurious, exclusive social club with selected members. Most of them were Europeans and Anglo- Egyptians. On its

premises the compulsory official languages were French and English. It provided such recreational and social amenities as tennis, swimming, bowling and dancing. But it had one disadvantage: no one with a black skin could become a member or wander around the club. I knew this, as my Malayan friend Hasan had been there. He was not only refused service but was assaulted before being ejected from the place.

I found it difficult to believe that such a discriminating club existed, not so much on African soil, but of all places in Nasser's multi-racial Egypt. I decided that I must see the place for myself, and braced myself for the worst.

'I'll tell you what we'll do, Hasan. We'll go along to this place together, order some drinks and engage in discussion with some of the young set.'

Hasan was quick to tell me that he wanted no part of the plan, considering the rough treatment he had received three days earlier.

'Those people know me and the moment I enter the grounds I will be spotted and beaten up again. I would not advise you to go there either. Anyway, don't count on me.'

'You're not playing chicken, Hasan? I can assure you that Nasser will not tolerate such things happening in this country.'

He replied: 'This club and its racial discrimination have been going on for years. There is no way Nasser can find out, because the members are all big-shots who are in league with the police and government men. They only need to give them baksheesh and Nasser will never find out what goes on.'

'How do you manage to be so sure about all this Hasan?'

'Because when I was assaulted the police came and threatened to arrest me if I did not leave the premises. Take my advice, keep out of that club.'

Standing outside the main entrance to the grounds were two husky khaki-uniformed guards. They had no weapons except short heavy sticks strapped to their waists. I drove my scooter swiftly past them, and their shouts and attempts to stop me failed.

Inside the grounds a football match was going on, so I parked my scooter and went to a vacant seat under a shed facing the field. I hailed one of two white- uniformed, black skinned attendants nearby for service. Both of them gazed at me scornfully. I saw one of them go into the restaurant. I stood up to speak with to the second attendant. He was watching me with wide-open mouth.

'Please, I would like a bottle of Coke. My table is over there.'

He took a surprised look at my face. It was frightfully hot and I was sweating profusely. He grumbled and uttered a few words in Arabic. I signalled to him that I could not understand him properly.

"I cannot serve any Arab, this is the order my master gave me.'

I demanded to know the reason for this. 'I am no Arab, but a visiting tourist from Nigeria.'

By this time his friend and five husky men in similar uniform had returned to the scene.

'We do not serve anyone who is not a European. We have been told to ask you to leave the club and to escort you outside,' one of them stated.

'May I speak to the manager or director of this place? I think I can come to some kind of an agreement with him.'

Soon I was surrounded by a number of sullen- faced European members.

The manager is standing over there and does not want to talk to you,' one of the Europeans replied. He was about twenty-seven years old and much below my height. The others watched with keen interest.

'We are going to give you two minutes to get up from that chair and out of this place,' another European chimed in.

'And if I refuse to leave?'

For an answer I felt the impact and pain of a plate being smashed over my head. Its shattered pieces were all over my shoulders and clothes. I did not know which man had done this. I was quickly on my feet and rammed my clenched fist into the face of the man who had threatened to eject me.

A rain of blows now came from every direction. I soon became the target for empty beer bottles and cans, plates of all sizes and stones. I picked up a chair and smashed it over a few of them. I was able to fight my way to the kitchen, which was a few yards away.

Here I helped myself to a stack of plates and dishes, and tossed them at my attackers. I did not spare any cases of beer, whisky and soft drink I could lay my hands on.

'He has gone berserk. Don't go near him, send for the police,' I heard one of them saying.

Women in bikinis and shorts were ducking here and there, while young children were screaming their heads off. I made sure I did a good job of damaging the crockery. I ran over from the kitchen to the office a few feet away. The typewriters were what I was looking for. By this time all

thought I really was insane, and kept their distance.

I found five typewriters in the office. They all went crashing through the windows, accompanied by the thick registry books and files. I tore their pages before tossing them out.

As I emerged from the office into the open I saw three police cars. The policemen drew their guns. I defied them and walked in the direction of the kitchen, trying to look even wilder. Before I could reach the kitchen, however, I was overpowered and thrown to the ground.

I was mauled and kicked as I lay helpless on the ground. My energy was gone and they succeeded in subduing me. I became powerless and unconscious.

When I came to I found myself in hospital, with a swollen face and jaws and blood all over my face, body and legs. I had had it all coming to me, this much I knew.

After three days in the hospital, where two police officers were detailed to guard me, I was taken to Gezira police station. For two more days I had a cell all to myself and my belongings were brought from the youth hostel. I was well fed and experienced no unpleasant treatment. From here two policemen took me to Alexandria, where I was put aboard a ship going to the Syrian port of Latakia.

Nasser had already arrived in Syria only a week ahead of me. Somehow, I decided, I must see him and relate my ugly

experience. From Latakia I drove my motor-scooter directly to Damascus in search of him.

24 *Conversation with Nasser*

IT WAS at the season of Ramadan (Moslem fast) when I arrived back in Damascus. I knew that for me to see Nasser in Damascus would be much more difficult than in Cairo.

As it was the time of Ramadan, Nasser rose at 4 a.m. every day to have breakfast. At about 6 a.m. he went back to bed and would not be up again until noon or later.

I was taking no chances. Every day at 6 a.m. for the next two weeks I was waiting directly in front of his presidential palace, hoping that he would come out. It was late every evening before I left the place to return to my hotel. I was confident that to seek an appointment with him through the official channel was useless, as I was a nobody.

On the evening of the thirteenth day my hitherto unpromising efforts proved fruitful. It was 5 p.m. on a cool Saturday evening. Nasser emerged from the interior of his residence and walked down the steps of the house, heading for his car.

I was in my flowing Nigerian agbada dress and made sure that I was conspicuous. Over the steel rails of the gate which

separated the street from his house I shouted as loudly as I could: 'President Nasser, I am an African visitor here. I have a complaint against Cairo police. I seek your permission to talk to you.'

He could hear my voice quite distinctly. Instead of getting into his car, he came straight over to where I was standing. He ordered his men to open the gate and let me into grounds.

Who do you say you are?'

I identified myself, but said nothing further about the trouble I had experienced in Cairo.

"I am going out for dinner with my Ministers. I will be very pleased if you can come back to see me tomorrow at three o'clock. I will be able to see you then.'

This gladdened my heart. The following day at the appointed time I was back at the presidential palace. I had to wait less than five minutes before I was ushered into the reception room where Nasser was waiting to receive me. Also present at the meeting was his now deposed Syrian Minister of Interior, Al Sarraj.

As I entered, Nasser's towering figure moved towards me. Smiling, he quickly stretched out his hand to shake mine. I watched him intently. He was clean- shaven except for a well-trimmed moustache. I found it difficult not to be

overwhelmed by his electrifying personality, his refined manners, cultured voice and, above all, his unsophisticated charm.

I could see that his slightly greying hair and prominent nose were both of advantage to his commanding personality. Along with his studious, half- smiling face, they made him look much younger than his forty-two years. He was dressed in a neatly tailored grey flannel suit with a matching tie.

I felt that his great assets were his charm, astuteness and directness. He talked mostly about Arab nationalism and Israeli Zionism. He also answered frankly questions on a variety of subjects.

'I take it that you have read my book *The Philosophy of my Revolution*?' was the first question he fired at me. I was embarrassed, as I had to admit that I had not read the book.

'The main purpose monarchy of our revolution concentrate is to help the poor destroy absolute monarchy and concentrate on economic and industrial improvement as well as introduce mass education. Our revolution has achieved a lot against imperialism, Zionism, feudal landlords and Arab reactionary agents in our community.'

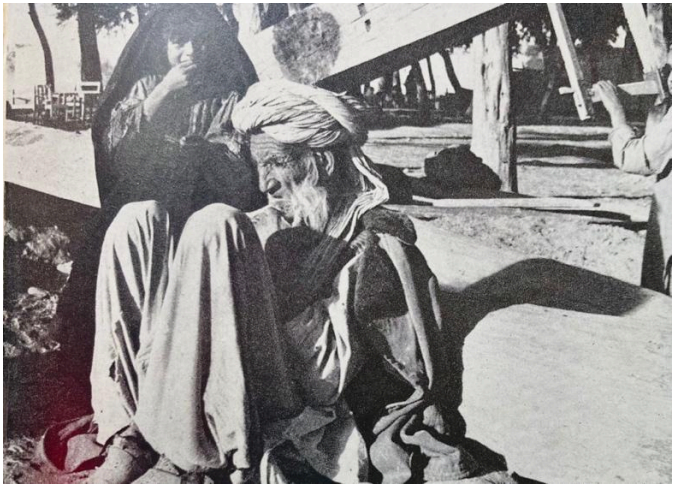
"If I may ask you, what do you mean by "Zionism" and "reactionary agents"?'
"Zionists, Mr. Ajala, are the Jews who have planted themselves on Arab soil with the full assistance of the

imperialist powers, Britain and France in particular. As for reactionary elements, you can easily spot them in any community. They are the stooges, the people in your society with only destructive criticism to offer. They are the people among us who engage in sabotaging Arab unity and who favour Zionism. You will find them mostly in Jordan and Saudi Arabia,' he emphasized.

He went on to state that he seeks no wealth for himself in the struggle for Arab unity. The mystical identification of himself with Arab nationalism is uncorrupted by ideas of individual grandeur or prestige. He believes that sooner than anyone envisages, Arab unity will come, and then it will have an effective role to play in world affairs.

'Zionism will be destroyed as surely as the British imperialists were driven from the Suez Canal.'

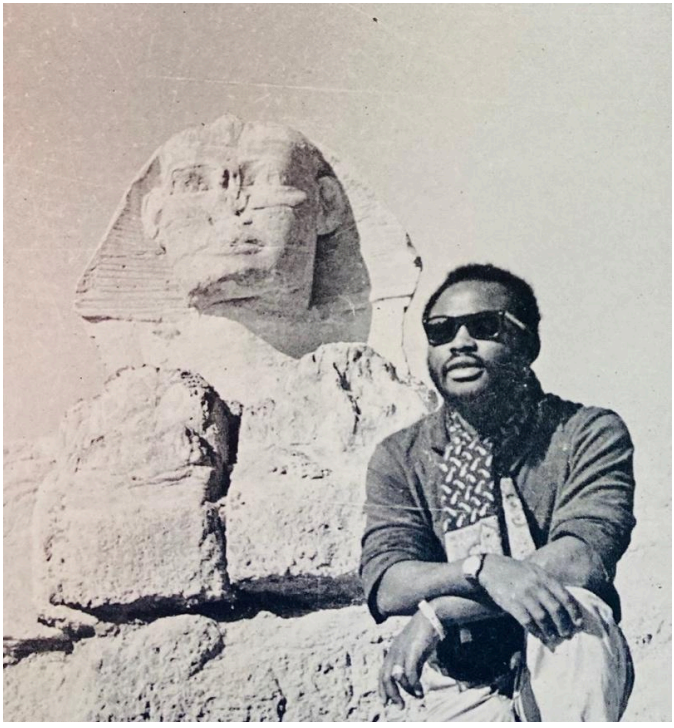
As he talked on Arab unity, I gathered the impression that his conception is that of a tightly knit Arab unity which would be friendly to, but at the same time keep a distance from, the communist and western powers.



An Ancient Israeli Arab and a child

My Lebanese captors on the Israeli-Arab frontier

Nasser was cordial



The Sphinx and I

Nasser appreciates the fact that he is very much a misunderstood statesman and is represented as a hot-blooded nationalist.

'I am much less than this. I am a reasonable nationalist, certainly not a fanatic. I have no respect for anyone who is not prepared to reason with me.'

As an ardent Moslem, he believes that Allah is his Guide, and beyond Allah there is no one he need to fear. With his fellow Arabs he maintains and enjoys brotherly love and affection. He sees himself as the voice, spirit and dedicated instrument of Arabism. He need not be afraid of assassination by his fellow Arabs. He enjoys mixing freely with them, without any fear for his life.

Talking about Israel he says: 'I hold no grudge against the Jews. Mohammed had friends among them and traded with them. We Arabs are not happy with them because over a million of us were driven out of our homeland so that the displaced Zionists could take our place.

'France's and Britain's continuous assistance and supply of weapons to Israel made our task to move the Zionists from Arab soil difficult. Sooner or later this goal will be achieved and our Arab brothers will return to their homes in Palestine.'

'Sir,' I butted in, 'are you not of the opinion that by coming to amiable terms with Israel the Arabs could derive much

benefit and knowledge—as much as you could extend to the Israelis—both economically and educationally?'

Nasser's face took on an unpleasant expression. For a while I regretted having suggested this.

'I do not believe this will ever be possible. Neither of us would have anything to offer the other. The only thing we shall settle for is that the Zionists vacate Palestine in order to avoid bloodshed and an open war, which may affect the security of mankind.'

As he spoke on Israel, I could see that he was not as bitter as the expression on his face suggested. He was looking quite ferocious.

'On what political theory could one say your government is based?' I asked Nasser.

'We are working towards guided socialism. Neither communism nor democracy in their true interpretation can be used to advantage in our society. We are applying socialistic legislations which will guide us towards our goal. We have borrowed knowledge from both Marxism and democracy. This knowledge was used to destroy the Monarchy, Arab capitalists and feudal landlords. We have used democratic principles—"government of the people, by the people and for the people". We raise the poor and the peasants, give them homes, farms and enough money to start their farming.'

He talked next about African nationalism and the necessity for a brotherly association between the African and Asian countries.

As the champions and fighters against colonialism, oppression and imperialism, we Arabs must fight alongside the Africans. We are violently opposed to the South African Government's racial apartheid. Our voice shall continue to be heard in the United Nations against such dangerous ventures by the imperialists as the Portuguese in Angola.

'We shall come to the aid of African freedom fighters when we are called upon. Egypt is a member of the Casablanca group.'

No doubt about it, Nasser is an impressive and convincing speaker. This I must say was one of the virtues which brought him to power and has kept him there for so long. He possesses a wealth of knowledge on international politics. He wields an impressive communicative power and is not evasive when answering one's questions.

I saw him as a modest yet authoritative leader. His political and economic measures have certainly brought with them some kind of an understanding and affection from his people. And, for all its pitfalls, Egypt since Nasser came to power has probably been the most stable of the Afro-Asian countries.

To anyone who has not had the chance of meeting Nasser and of talking with him, he might appear a terror, a fanatical nationalist and a dictator of the worst type. All these opinions would be presumptuous and far from correct.

He is a religious and a family man, with an acute sense of responsibility. His friends and close acquaintances agree that he is approachable and immensely affable. Also, he possesses a keen sense of humour and is a witty and enthusiastic fellow. He is certainly not as controversial or as thick-headed as one is often made to believe by those who have reason to hate him.

His last words as I was getting ready to leave were encouraging and appeared to be weighted with his beliefs:

'In the United Arab Republic, as it ought to be, each human being is equal, irrespective of his colour, race and religion.'

A few months after my interview with President Nasser, during which I had related to him the account of the Gezira Country Club incident, the elite club was nationalized. Today Gezira Club has become a national recreation ground, where anyone is free to go, thanks to Nasser and his swift action.

PART SEVEN

AUSTRALIA

25 *Profile of Australia*

IF THERE is one truly politically democratic country out of the eighty-seven I have seen so far it is Australia. Even compared with the United States and the Philippines, Australia is second to none where freedom of the Press and open criticism of the government are concerned, despite occasional abuses of this freedom by the Press itself.

Regrettably, and unhappily it must be for many, that after its long years of colonial tutelage and, later, independence, the government of the land is still loitering on the cross-roads of maturity. As with previous governments, the present one is reserved and unpredictable in its foreign policies.

While Australia, unlike America, does not seem to condone or practise the principle of 'cordial non- involvement', she feels that she has nothing in common with her closest neighbours—the Asian countries.

'Our real ties with the Asians,' said a Canberra official, 'lie in selling them our products and educating those who come here under the Colombo Plan agreement.' He added, 'In

trade they make good credit buyers, but bad debtors and chronic defaulters when it comes to payment.'

In spite of Australia's political virtues, I know of no other nation whose policies—foreign and domestic—are so violently misunderstood and misrepresented abroad. With the exception of her closest ally, Great Britain, it would be difficult for Australia to say exactly who are her friends or enemies. Her territorial neighbours in Asia, including India, Indonesia and the Philippines, look at her not scornfully but with a maximum of caution and suspicion. They hold many misgivings about her.

There appears to be a certain amount of truth and justification in some of these misgivings. Australia has never considered herself an Asian country despite her geographic location; her cherished 'White Australia' policy is strictly designed to keep out Asians and other coloured races. She almost fanatically encourages immigrants from Europe and America and pays their transport fares, and she has long shamefully neglected and disregarded the care and progress of her black skinned aborigines. Such flagrant ill-treatment was rightly described in the State Legislative Assembly in Sydney by a Member of Parliament, Mr. J. G. Beale, as making the aborigines 'outcasts in the land of their birth' (see *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 March 1963).

What more? One is also reminded of the provocative role played by Australia at the height of the tension between the

Dutch and Indonesians over West New Guinea, now West Irian.

At the time of writing, fear and the threat of war are mounting over 'Malaysia'. This principally involves Indonesia and the Philippines on one hand and Malaya on the other. Britain and Australia have come out openly to support Malaya against any 'aggressive' attempt which Indonesia and the Philippines might undertake to prevent Malaysia's birth.

Whitehall and Canberra's open support for Malaya against the Philippines and Indonesia must give one second thoughts about Soekarno's fear and contention that 'Malaysia is another form of neo- colonialism, designed as an imperialist tool to encircle Indonesian territory and later to embark on unfriendly acts of political intrigue and sabotage'. One wonders why Australia did not volunteer to play the neutral role of mediator in this crisis.

The reader will appreciate that I have not space here to discuss Malaysia, Indonesia or the Philippines, and their roles in South-East Asia, but will have to leave them for a subsequent volume.

In the Asian countries I went through as I traced my way to Australia almost everything that I was told of the people in Australia was disturbing and uncomplimentary. A mere mention that I was going to Australia was enough to make people shudder and even advise me against it. 'You are going

to a country whose racial discrimination against coloured people is worse than in South Africa.' This was one of many cheerful warnings I commonly heard from Asians, none of whom had even been to the country.

Indonesia's Foreign Minister, Dr. Sobandrio, who had visited Australia, had far different advice to give me when I went to interview him. He was most encouraging.

'You will find the country not only beautiful but the Australians are very friendly to and sociable with foreigners.'

I took all advice with caution and was neither optimistic nor pessimistic as to my reception when I arrived in Australia. 'The longest I will stay in the country once I find the people not to my liking will be a month or less,' I promised myself. I was not banking too much on Dr. Sobandrio's words. He is a 'big-shot' and the Australian Government would be obliged to make him feel welcome, with red-carpet treatment and all. I was just a tourist, and a black one at that.

The warnings of my Asian friends became a reality soon after the Quantas aircraft that brought me from Djakarta touched down in Darwin, the first Australian port of landing. Two hefty medical-health inspectors boarded the plane. Except for me, all the passengers were white Europeans or Americans. The health inspectors wasted no time in declaring that all passengers except me were

medically in good shape and could land. This was after they had examined everyone's health certificate.

One of them, after talking to me, pocketed my document. 'I'll have to examine your health papers in the office. I'll be back in a few minutes. Please stay in the aircraft,' he warned me politely.

'What's this, the "White Australian" policy? As you can see on my medical certificate, I have been vaccinated for cholera, small-pox, typhoid, yellow fever—the lot, except for kangaroo fever.'

He did not appreciate this. The previous official expression on his round face changed to one of exasperation.

Don't get bloody cheeky with me or get any stupid idea about racial discrimination. The colour of anybody's skin doesn't make any bloody difference to us in Australia. Get that through your head. Now be a good bloke and bloody well stay here until I get back,' he said in a calmer manner.

A little less than ten minutes later a Quantas hostess returned to guide me to the airport terminal building. My 'friend' with whom I had exchanged the harsh words was not around. The hostess ushered me before two more medical officers, both wearing white shirts and shorts. One of them, holding my health card in his hand, asked, 'Where are you coming from?'

I told them that I was coming from Djarkata on my way to Sydney.

'We want to know where you were born.' After I had answered their questions both of

them started inspecting my arms, legs and the palms of the hands and soles of my feet. I was curious myself as to what they could be looking for.

'What's wrong, you guys, haven't you seen a man with black skin before?'

They looked at each other, obviously thinking that I was a wise guy.

'Your kind comes through here every day. We're only making sure of your health. We can see now that you are okay. Here is your card. You can join the other passengers for Sydney upstairs.'

My arrival in Sydney about eight hours later was soon to make up for the embarrassing incident at Darwin. In Sydney the immigration and customs officers were smiling and friendly, with excellent manners. They were helpful beyond my belief.

'How long do you want to stay in Australia?' was the question asked by the immigration officer.

'One month.'

'Well, I'll give you two. If you find that you'll be staying longer just go to our office in the city and they will extend the permit.'

Less than seven minutes after the plane landed I had gone through the airport formalities and was on my way to the Y.M.C.A. in Pitt Street.

At the Y.M.C.A. I found friendly, Christian- minded and sociable people. I was made to feel that here was home and comfort at last by its officials, members and everyone that I came in contact with during my stay. By the time I had finished my rounds of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra I felt as if I were a part of the Australian way of life myself.

There was hospitality, understanding, guidance and invitations to 'sessions of beer' given me by nearly every white person I came to know. I made more friends and attended more parties in one month than in all my college years in America. In Sydney I met my Australian-born wife Joane.

I must mention another unpleasant incident which I experienced. It was, happily, the only one of its kind. It happened in the 'tough' section of Sydney—Woolloomoolloo. Here I clashed with a group of leather-jacketed punks known as the 'Rockers', the

Australian version of London's Teddy boys or the young gangland ruffians of New York City.

Sydney 'Rockers' are a bunch of loud-mouthed trouble shooters, usually barefooted and dressed in tight jeans.

It was about 10 p.m. and I was walking along Palmer and William streets making for my digs at King's Cross. Coming in my direction was a bunch of cigarette-puffing, howling and whistling fellows. As I saw them walking towards me on the same footpath, I moved further to the right, pressing closer to the wall to provide enough room for them to pass.

'Get out of the way, you black nigger,' a big, wide-chested and bushy-haired delinquent ordered.

I kept my distance, but at the same time I was not going to keep quiet.

'Are you talking to me, tough guy?' I demanded. They were about twelve in number and of all sizes and builds: tall, short, hefty, skinny and robust. All of them had in common crewcut hair, leather jackets and faded blue jeans. None of them could have been over twenty- one years old and they didn't bother to speak proper English.

'Yeah, we're talkin' to ya,ya big black bastard. Now watcha goin' to do about it?' a hefty, mean-looking character chimed in.

"See here, stupid, we're the "Rockers" and we own this town, the police and the lot. So bloody well get that through your thick skull,' a short, sly-eyed kid added.

'Listen, you yellow chickens. I'll take on each and every one of you by turn if I can believe you won't all gang up on me. And I mean that—round the corner. What do you say?' I challenged.

The wide-chested boy answered. He moved closer with his gang and quickly grabbed my throat. He held the collar of my shirt tightly around my neck, half choking me.

'Get this, "Joe Louis", we ain't goin' to make any bloody promise. You breathe another bloody word and we'll chop you to pieces with our knives. Now get lost.'

I took him seriously. As he let go my throat and the collar of my shirt, a couple of his mates were brandishing something shiny. Just as the hoodlum had ordered, I got 'lost' and took to my heels, fast. I wasn't going to take any chances or try to play tough with them.

These fellows were terrorizing hoodlums, just savages and worse than the 'savages' in Africa, I said to myself.

A few blocks away I ran into a police Black Maria. In it there were both plain-clothed and uniformed officers. After I had told them what had happened I was invited to get into their

wagon to look for the young hoodlums.

For more than an hour we patrolled the neighbourhood looking for them, but they were nowhere to be found. They had vanished into the night. The police apologized, assured me that it was the first time it had happened and I could rest assured that it would not occur again.

'Usually these brats fight between themselves— the "Rockers" versus the "Surfies", as they call themselves. Maybe tonight they could not find their arch enemies, the "Surfies". They are headaches for us. Funny thing about it all is that most of them come from good families,' the police inspector said, regretfully.

I must say that the police were right, nothing of this sort has happened to me since in Australia.

Three nights later, about midnight, another quite different incident occurred. This time it involved two Sydney police detectives and myself.

I was walking along Victoria Street in King's Cross on my way back to the Y.M.C.A. For almost fifteen minutes after I had left the Porgy and Bess cafe on Darlinghurst Road I had noticed a black sedan containing two men slowly cruising behind me. I did not attach much importance to this, as the car carried no special insignia. I thought the men must be looking for a street address. I kept on walking, occasionally glancing back.

After I had been trailed from the coffee-bar into Macleay and Orwell streets, and finally into Victoria Street, the car suddenly picked up speed and halted at my side, just as I was attempting to dash across the road.

'Are you fellows blind or something?' I shouted at them.

They both got out of the car. While the one from behind the wheel was fat, tall and husky, the second was a slim six-footer with a smiling face. His hat was tipped slightly over his face.

'Sorry, old chap, we didn't mean to run you down. Don't take offence,' he said.

The other man was just as polite, but rather inquisitive. 'Didn't I see you a few weeks ago on Palmer Street—you know, where the "leggies" are.'

'What do you mean by "leggies"?'

His companion came to my rescue. 'He means prostitutes on Palmer Street, and he wants to know if you were there last week.'

'As it happens, I've been in Sydney only three days. You and your friend must have me mixed up with someone else. Anyway, what business is it of yours?'

'We are Sydney police detectives from Forbes Street. How about coming into our car where we can talk. It's bloody cold out here.'

The interrogation that took place in the car for the next forty-five minutes was to me unbelievably absurd.

In nearly every country I have visited, I have been taken for one thing or another—from a hired assassin to an espionage agent. However, Sydney beats them all. Here the two police detectives suspected me not only as a dope-pedlar but as the notorious Sydney sex-mutilator.

The horribly true story of Sydney's sex- mutilation murders, headline news as they were in Australia, had not received much world publicity. I for one had not heard about them until the night I was picked up.

During the few months preceding my arrival in Sydney, the mutilator, thought to be a man from the violence of the crimes, had been prowling the city and inner suburbs by night, attacking men. His practice was to hide himself in a dimly lit, deserted street, sometimes in the low-lying branches of a tree or on top of a fence, from where he would pounce on the back of his victim.

In all cases his victims were alone and most had been drinking. First they were stabbed in the back of the neck and then mutilated with a sharp instrument, thought to be

a dagger or sharply pointed knife.

In a few months the murderer claimed more than four victims.

Sydney police made a list of possible suspects, including seamen, perverts, nymphomaniacs, dope- addicts, homosexuals and lesbians. Known robbers, burglars and gamblers were omitted from the list as this crime was hardly in their line.

Almost eighteen months later, a man identified as an English immigrant was arrested and charged with the dastardly crimes.

After I had sufficiently identified myself and convinced the police that I could not be the attacker, the fat one stated: 'The whole police network of Sydney is looking for this man. There is a ransom of $5,000 on his head.'

His mate contributed: 'We think that if this chap is not an Australian he must be a seaman from somewhere in Africa, possibly North Africa.

"What makes you think that?' I wanted to know.

'Because the last time anything like this happened was over fifty years ago in Egypt. That's what Interpol tells us.'

"True, I am an African, but a full-blooded one and certainly not an Arab. Now, you chaps, either arrest me or turn me loose.'

They kindly offered to drive me to the Y.M.C.A ., as they said Sydney was not safe for anyone to be wandering about in alone at that time of the night.

'We don't want you to be the next victim of the mutilator, you know. And in future, while you are in Sydney, don't bloody well stay out so late.'

As I got out of their car to mount the steps of the Y.M.C.A ., the lean-figured officer called me back. 'Meet us next Wednesday at the Cross about 7 p.m. We'll take you along to Palmer Street to meet some of the "leggies". We'll fix you up, it won't cost you a bloody penny.'

They drove off, roaring with laughter.

After I had spent two months in Sydney another collision with the police occurred, this time with the N.S.W. State Chief Commissioner of Police, Mr. Norman Allan. It happened at Sydney Airport, where I had gone to cover the arrival of the Duke of Edinburgh for a local newspaper.

My successful attempt for a close-up snap of the Duke created such a furore among the police that I was almost shot. It was regarded as unconventional, to say the least, for any photo-reporter to come close to a member of the royal

family. This rather trifling incident made front-page news all over Australia.

While Melbourne's *Age* headlined 'Nigerian "shot" the Duke', Sydney's *Daily Mirror* front-paged a photo showing the Duke walking towards me as I was photographing him. Above the blown-up picture screamed the words, 'He risked a shot'. The *Daily Mirror* account of the incident went on to say:

'A Nigerian journalist in national costume broke through the barriers at Mascot Airport to take close-up pictures of the Duke of Edinburgh. He could have got himself shot by security men. Before police could remove him he was face to face with the Duke and the Governor, Sir Eric Woodward. The Duke smiled and told him, "You had better hurry up."

'A Commonwealth security officer said later: "More than one of our men had his hands on his gun this morning. Not that we seriously thought it would be necessary to take such drastic action."

After the Duke had boarded the aircraft, a towering figure, frowning and with a determined expression, sauntered up to me as I walked towards the exit. In a quiet, cultured voice he said: 'Say here, I am the State Commissioner of Police. I must tell you that you should not have done that for your own safety.'

'I wasn't out to create any trouble, just to take a couple of close-up shots of the Duke; he is such a nice and understanding chap. My apologies, please,' I told the Chief.

The police were very pleasant and understanding. I felt that an incident like that in any other country, particularly in Asia, would have resulted in my arrest, if not death.

For a while the 'Cross', the Greenwich Village of Sydney, was my home. As I write this I have been in Australia for ten months. Except for what happened on my arrival in Darwin and this clash with the 'Rockers' in Sydney I have had no other cause to regret one day of my stay in this country. As much as I expected to find racial discrimination in Australia, I now have no reason to believe that it exists. The many Afro-Asian students I talked with confirmed my own experience. One has to visit Australia before this can be appreciated. It does, of course, have one great vice—the crude treatment of its aborigines. This I shall unfold in the following chapter.

I can hardly describe adequately the kindly guidance and co-operation I received from the government officials whom I interviewed both in Canberra and Sydney in the process of gathering material for this book. Some of these men I must mention here. There is Sir Garfield Barwick, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and one of his deputies, Mr. J. A. Anderson; Messrs. Ian Hamilton, C. C. Brammell and Brian Johns of the News Information Department; Mr. Dudley Mccarthy, Director of the Aborigines Welfare Board

and Territories Affairs; Messrs. Peter Hayden and Harry Keen of the Immigration Department, officials in the department for the Colombo Plan; David Sadlier and the Australian Embassy in Manila, Philippines.

During the long interview I had with Sir Garfield at his Sydney office I enlisted his assistance in interviewing the Prime Minister, Sir R. G. Menzies.

'I shall remember to mention to him your request. I will advise that you write to him also,' Sir Garfield suggested.

A few days after I had interviewed and renewed my acquaintance with Sir Garfield, whom I had first met at the time of his courtesy visit to President Soekarno in Djakarta, I wrote to Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies. Here is his reply, dated 31 October 1962.

'Dear Mr. Ajala, I have received your letter of 17th October requesting an interview, the outcome of which would later be covered in a book which you will be publishing.

'I make it a rule not to give special interviews for publication. In any event, I am very hard-pressed for time. But should you wish to acquire facts relating to the Commonwealth I am sure my department will do all in its power to help you. Yours sincerely, R. G. Menzies.' (signed).

In Australia the Foreign Minister, Sir Garfield Barwick, is a controversial and often an unpopular figure, particularly

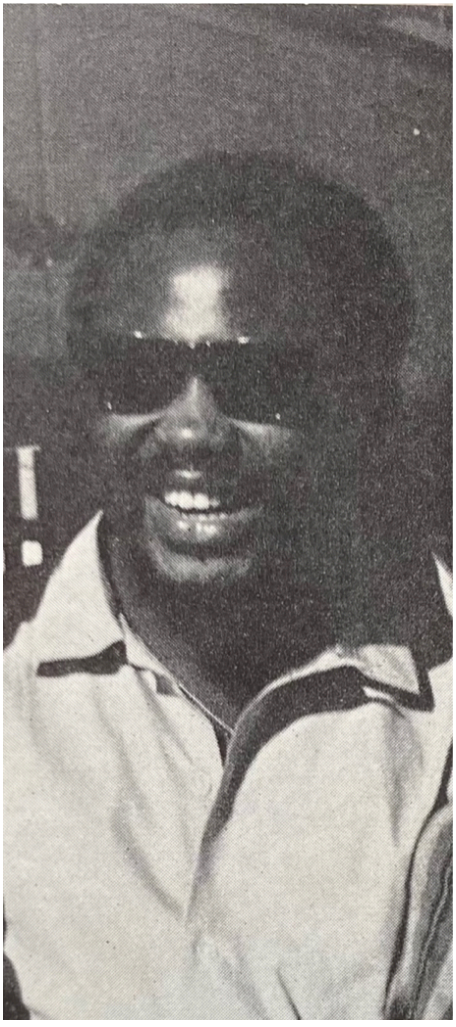
with the Press. It comes to the point where every time one picks up a newspaper his critics are irrationally breathing down his neck. He is usually accused of going 'soft' on Indonesian 'warlike threats', of deliberately minimizing to the Australian public the 'seriousness' of Djakarta's military power and Soekarno's 'expansionist policy'.

Some of his ardent critics have even gone so far as to suggest that Prime Minister Menzies' waning fame would pick up if he were to drop his Foreign Minister from the Cabinet. As one leading Sydney paper wrote:

'. . . will certainly strengthen the hands of those who believe Sir Garfield is not sufficiently experienced to hold the External Affairs portfolio.'

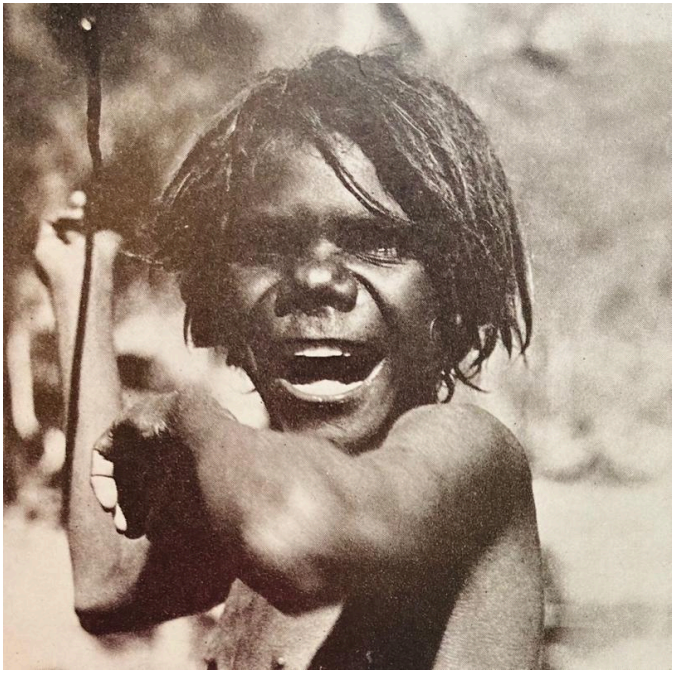
Anyone who follows Australian politics with keen interest will notice that the art of war-mongering, the creation of a state of political tension and unrest in the minds of the public, and even attempts at formulating the government foreign policy, are generally ruthlessly carried on by the newspapers instead of by the politicians and the Cabinet.

The newspapers endeavour to inform the government when it should arm itself against the 'enemy' and what type of weapons the country needs and where to get them. The papers do much to fan the flame of war, even to the extent of putting pressure on the government to take drastic and decisive steps against its 'unfriendly neighbour'.



With my wife and her niece

Mrs. Dorothy Mkparu of Nigeria chatting with Mrs. Lazar Forster, a part aboriginal, at the Aboriginal Reserve La Perouse



Young aboriginal practicing with is spear. (Australian News and Information Bureau)

Full-blooded aborigines in their natural environment
(Australian News and Information Bureau)

As one paper put it:

'The hard fact remains that the new state of Indonesia created only after World War II, is now capable of threatening the peace of the whole Pacific. The Australian Labour Party will find, just as the Menzies government is finding, that from now on it will be impossible to sit on the side-lines in the Pacific'.

There is no doubt that there is a definite cause for alarm about Indonesia's build-up of military power. It is increasingly stocking up with the latest Russian- made weapons. The Indonesians tell us that this is purely 'in self-defence of our country against neo- colonialists.

However, it cannot be denied that in Australia now there is a strong fear of Indonesia, which is becoming a phobia, particularly with the Press. It is founded on the baseless theory that Indonesia is out to capture not only East New Guinea but the Australian mainland as well, with the full military assistance of Russia and Red China. 'Here is the Cuba of Asia. All the Russian weapons from Cuba are being dumped in Indonesia,' one often hears.

During my stay in Australia I have watched with keen interest its political trends and relationship with its Asian neighbours. I feel that there is no other politician or Cabinet Minister who undertakes more to strengthen the bridge of friendship and understanding with the Asian countries than Sir Garfield Barwick. He has done more

travelling in Asia to extend Australia's warm hand of friendship to its neighbours than any other man in the present or past governments. He went as far as Pakistan, India and Vietnam, and included visits to Indonesia and the Philippines in the same month —this is some indication of his energy and enthusiasm.

The fact that the Australian Government and its people have suddenly become wide awake to the need for friendship with the Asians as a necessity rather than a mere choice can be largely credited to Sir Garfield's efforts.

Sir Garfield Barwick, before he went into politics, was regarded as one of Australia's leading barristers, as was Prime Minister Menzies. Sir Garfield was a Queen's Counsellor and left his lucrative profession to take up a Cabinet post. He is a short, shrewd and soft-voiced statesman, reserved in manner. When engaging in conversation he is wittier, more humorous and informal than the usual withdrawn expression on his face suggests. He is a polite, charming and well intentioned man of middle age.

When I went to see him at his office on the sixth floor of Phillip House in Sydney his face, with its penetrating eyes, held no trace of bitterness, despite the constant criticism he has faced over the years.

'Here you are again, Ajala. Last time I saw you you were shaking hands with Soekarno at his Bogor Palace in

Indonesia. Now what are you up to in Sydney?' he cheerfully asked. He had certainly kept his good humour. In a typically Australian manner he offered me the choice between a cup of tea or coffee as I sat down on a leather-upholstered divan.

Author: I was looking forward very much to meeting you again, Sir Garfield. How did you enjoy your visit to Djakarta?

Sir Garfield: Not bad, not bad. It's a beautiful country, I must admit. I rather enjoyed the Indonesian local dancers. There is nothing better than making friends with all our neighbours.

Author: Well, it's good to know that you believe in that, sir. I take it, then, that you will pay visits to other Asian countries from time to time.

Sir Garfield: We believe that is the best way of cementing good relations and knowing one's neighbours. We have been very misunderstood in the past by our Asian friends. Now we must break down that barrier. You have been in Sydney for some time, how do you like it?

Author: I must confess that I am finding myself very much at home, contrary to what I expected.

Sir Garfield: What do you mean, 'contrary to what you expected'?

Author: Well, all this talk about the 'White Australia' policy I had heard so much about before coming to Australia.

Sir Garfield: That is just one of the things I meant by our policy being misunderstood in Asia and even Africa.

Author: Would you care to comment on this 'White Australia' policy, then?

Sir Garfield: Don't be stupid, my friend. You are too intelligent for that. You must know by now that there is really no such thing as the 'White Australia' policy.

Author: But the Asian and African people certainly believe that there is one in this country.

Sir Garfield: Tell me, how long have you been here in Sydney? Author : About two weeks.

Sir Garfield: Have you been to any hotel, bar, restaurant or any other place where you have been refused service because you have black skin? Have you ever been stopped in the street by a policeman and asked to identify yourself?

Author: I will say no to all your questions.

Sir Garfield: That is just to show you that we have no racial discrimination in this country. We do have certain immigration laws, like any other country. These laws are

what are misunderstood by our neighbours.

Author: Do you have any particular immigration law in mind that is misunderstood?

Sir Garfield: I am not the Immigration Minister, but I believe that there is a law which says we can allow or refuse entry into Australia to any foreigner. It has nothing to do with the colour of anybody's skin. We can't afford to allow into the country irresponsible aliens, you know. Also, Australia's economy must be protected against cheap labour.

Author: But where does this 'White Australia' policy come from?

Sir Garfield: The government has nothing to do with it. You will not find it in our immigration or parliamentary documents. As far as we are concerned, there is no 'White Australia' policy. It just doesn't exist. Some hot-headed chap coined the phrase years ago and now we're stuck with it.

Author: Is your government doing anything to enlighten Asians about this?

Sir Garfield: We are just getting started. We have our embassies to do this for us all over Asia and Africa. We must be friends with our neighbours. In Australia we have more than 1,500 Colombo Plan students from different parts of Asia and Africa. The Australian Government is paying their

full expenses— education, food and lodging. Certainly you can see that we want all kinds of races to come to Australia, to study their chosen professions and to learn more about us.

Author: You said something about protecting the Australian economy from cheap labour. Just what do you mean?

Sir Garfield: We must not allow into Australia an influx of such immigrants as will indulge in cheap labour. Our population is only ten million, and if too many of these people are allowed into the country we'll be faced with inflation and economic collapse. Our way of life is quite different from theirs.

Author: But Australia is such a vast territory—a continent in itself. With the rapid expansion of heavy industry, big economic development and other gigantic projects, couldn't you use the services of 'these people'? I hardly think that their coming here could upset your country's economy or labour.

Sir Garfield: My government and our people think that once we open our doors for them to come in, our economy and way of life will be affected. We'll be faced with slums and racial disturbances, just as in America and Britain. However, we do want their friendship and we want them to come to Australia as visitors and students.

Author: Talking of friendship and good relations with your neighbours, the people of Africa know very little about Australia. Do you think the Prime Minister or you yourself might make a goodwill tour of the African continent in the foreseeable future?

Sir Garfield: It is the plan of our government to know more about Africa and for Africans to come to know about us. As soon as time allows, I am sure the Prime Minister and other government officials will be eager to make goodwill visits to every independent country in Africa. Not so long ago we established diplomatic posts in a few countries, including Nigeria, the Congo, Tanganyika and Ghana. We shall be establishing more as time goes on.

Author: I notice that Australia has many rice farms, yet rice is not one of the staple foods of the country. You could export a lot of it to the African countries.

Sir Garfield: We do not have much trade with Africa, but we are on the verge. Our rice is exported mostly to the Asian countries. We grow it here to relieve starvation in Asia. Whenever there is a flood or other disaster in one of these countries, besides clothing, blankets and medical equipment we send them our rice. We don't usually give financial assistance. We still depend on foreign aid ourselves.

In the course of further discussion Sir Garfield confided that Australia finances industrial, technical and educational projects in a number of Asian countries under the

Colombo Plan: a salt-processing factory in the Philippines, wheat-mill in Ceylon, textile factory in Indonesia, irrigation projects in India and Pakistan, higher education in Vietnam and hospitals and supplies of medical equipment in other areas.

'Malaysia is a feasible practical and encouraging scheme; we are all for it,' he assured me, when I asked his view on it.

Just before I was ready to leave he had another quip to make on 'the so-called "White Australia" policy'.

'Take our young people, I mean our girls and boys. They all want to look black as soon as the summer weather arrives. On all our beaches you will find them sunbaking until they're burnt black. I even have trouble recognizing some of them who work in my office after they return from holidays. This is an even more common practice with our young women than our men, and here we are in Australia being accused of a "White" policy. What could be more paradoxical?'

26 *The Aborigines: Australia's Disappearing Race*

WHO are the Australian aborigines? In all my years of travel I had never met one until I came to Australia, which is the only country where these people can be found. They are a unique race, most of whom are still living very much in Stone Age conditions through no fault of their own.

In appearance the full-blooded aboriginal is lean, with chocolate brown or dark coffee-coloured skin, whose texture is smooth, except on the chest, which often shows long raised lines of tribal marks. The 'abo' or 'blackfeller', as he is called by the white Australian, has a deceptively wild and fierce look, partly owing to his large, flashing eyes. An abundance of often wavy, black hair covers his large head. His nose is broad and flat, with wide nostrils, and his average height is five feet seven inches.

Despite his frightening appearance, I was astonished to discover that the Australian aboriginal is, on the whole, absolutely harmless, shy and innocently timid, with a great sense of humour. It is not easy for one to get him to talk, as he is very suspicious and sensitive in the presence of an

outsider, especially a white. This has been attributed to his psychological fear, based, with justification, on his previous disastrous contacts with the white race.

In his natural habitat the aboriginal lives a strange life, conditioned by his surroundings. He has always been nomadic, moving from one tribal hunting ground to another. His only shelter is the little 'humpy' made of bark and skins, which is easily built when the group decides to settle for a short time. Before the white man came there were no indigenous animals which could be tamed and used for the community, nor were there crops which could be cultivated to form an economic basis for a permanent settlement. As a consequence, aborigines never built towns or permanent dwellings.

Depending on the area, aborigines went either naked or were clothed in animal skins—those of kangaroo, wallaby, wombat and so on. They are, in their natural environment, expert hunters and trackers, using various weapons, including boomerang and spear, which they can throw great distances with deadly accuracy. The famous returning boomerang is not used in hunting, only for sport and competitions.

Though now deprived of most of their coastal hunting grounds, they are expert fishermen, using spears and small hand-nets. One of the jobs of the women is collecting yams and fat, white 'witchety' grubs, considered to be delicacies in the aboriginal diet.

As white settlement increased, the aborigines were pushed further and further inland, and they now inhabit arid desert areas, mostly in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and the 'Dead Centre', as central Australia is called. They roam these vast areas in small tribal groups, and will, without any warning, go 'walkabout'—perhaps for hundreds of miles and taking several months. They can find their way over tremendous, apparently trackless wastes, and know every water-hole for hundreds of miles around.

They have complex tribal laws and initiation rites, and the occasional infringement of these laws usually means death for the offender. Their picturesque mythology is a study in itself. As a high birth-rate would be disastrous to their precarious existence, many tribes have unusual marriage customs—older women take young husbands and young women are married to older men, a unique if perhaps unsatisfactory method of birth-control for those concerned.

The aboriginal population has been estimated as 'in the region of two million' at the time of the first white settlement in 1788. Today this population has declined to less than a hundred thousand, according to the official government gazette. Historians and anthropologists have given us conflicting and unsubstantiated theories concerning the origin of the aborigines.

In his book *Antiquity of Man* Sir Arthur Keith wrote:

'Of all the races of mankind now alive, the aboriginal race of Australia is the only one which, in my opinion, would serve as a common ancestor for all modern races. . . . The Australian native has those intermediate and generalized characteristics needed for such an ancestral form.'

Another version of the aborigines' origin is volunteered in a book *The Aborigines of Australia* by J. W. Bleakley:

'Probably one of the earliest theories is quoted in *Blair's History of Australasia*, published in 1879. It says that these people belonged to the Ethiopic family, ranked by ethnologists of those days as in the Papuan or Austral Negro scale, but were inferior, physically and mentally, to the African Negro.'

Other books on the same subject give different and contradictory versions, which will be useless to quote here. Some historians go so far as to say that the aborigines definitely came from Northern Europe, while others suggest India, Malaya, China and even Central Africa.

Unfortunately, the Australian Government, whether deliberately or innocently, has done little or nothing to preserve the culture, customs and population of this unique race. Those left are still wandering about naked, rubbing shoulders with kangaroos in the desert and arid parts of Australia.

Documented history shows that when in 1788 English settlers came to Australia every brutal effort was adopted in order to exterminate the aborigines. To a large extent the white settlers succeeded, particularly in Tasmania. In those days, only 150 years back, aborigines were hunted, tracked down and ruthlessly shot or beaten to death by white settlers. There were even occasional instances of water-holes being poisoned.

This is what the late John William Bleakley, once the government chief protector of aborigines in Queensland, had to say in his book *The Aborigines of Australia*:

'Perhaps the most inhuman of the many stories of the extermination of Tasmania's unfortunate aboriginal population had its beginning in 1803. . . . Twelve months after the first European settlement was formed in Tasmania a fatal clash occurred between the whites and blacks. An armed party of colonialists shot down unmercifully a large group of [aboriginal] men, women and children, who were approaching with every sign of friendship. This led to war between the two races, which, in little more than thirty years, caused the practical extermination of a fine race of people once estimated at 7,000 strong.'

The acts of cruelty and brutality shown towards the aborigines in early days became so notorious that Queen Victoria sympathetically interceded on their behalf. Queen Victoria was known to have 'written personally to the heads

of the government, expressing her deep concern about their treatment of the natives in the colonies'.

This quick interference by the Queen soon put a stop to what Hugh Munro Hall in Forty Years in Tasmania described as 'scenes of wanton slaughter of

aboriginal men, women and children during the war, as sport' and who pinpointed one European who kept a pickle tub in which he put the ears of all the blacks he shot.

Today in the state of Tasmania, one of the six Australian states, there is not a single full-blooded aboriginal. When my wife asked me to come to Tasmania, an island not far from Melbourne, I jokingly refused. 'I might easily be taken for an aboriginal and be shot on sight.'

She took me seriously for a moment and retorted: 'Don't be silly, that was years ago. Australians aren't like that today.'

What are the conditions of these aborigines in Australia today? There are officially two classes of aborigines: full-blood, most of whom are still living in the interior as they did hundreds of years ago, and part aborigines, who are usually found living on the fringe of towns and cities in tin-roofed wooden shanties, in unhygienic surroundings along with the mosquitoes.

I visited both the barren Northern Territory, where I saw many full-blooded aborigines in their natural primitive state, and the reserves of part-blood aborigines.

Two such reserves I visited were Cubbawee, near Lismore, and government-run La Perouse, about ten miles from Sydney, on the northern shore of Botany Bay.

While La Perouse Reserve was cleaner and better in appearance, with its narrow, untarred streets, tin-roofed fibro houses, and water and electricity laid on, Cubbawee, like many settlements all over the country, was disgusting. I saw dreadful squalor, subhuman-standard dwellings, muddy streets full of half-naked children, rickety shanties, and everywhere flies and other insects. There was no electricity or running water. The people on this settlement, approximately seventy in number, use well water. The whole area is marshy and is frequently flooded.

Several attempts have been made to find a new area for these people in Lismore, six miles away, but each area selected has been met with violent objections from people who live nearby.

At La Perouse Reserve an aged, part-aboriginal woman with whom I talked said that the government was not doing much to relieve their condition. In the words of seventy-three year old Mrs. Lazar Forster:

'We are poor but happy people, just like you people in Africa. The white man came and took our land, and treated us like their domestic animals. There are more than 200 people living on this camp, yet there are less than twenty houses for us.'

She led me over to her house, where I was introduced to her daughter, son-in-law and three grandchildren. They looked like any other Australian family, except that they wore no shoes, and the interior of their two-room cottage was disorganized and grubby.

It had two beds, a dirty wooden floor and ugly kitchen. There was no indoor toilet, but the area was sewered, I was told.

Mrs. Forster's son-in-law introduced himself. 'The name is

Donald Campbell, no relation to the British speed-car driver.' Donald, like most of the aboriginal males on the reserve, worked in one of the nearby factories. It could have been the Government Water Board, General Motors Holden, the papermill or oil-refinery. All these places are less than two miles from the reserve.

I also met the young missionary workers attached to the reserve, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Miles. The wife, Evelyn, had studied missionary work at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, and they have both dedicated their lives to the

Christian reformation of the aborigines. They have travelled over many parts of Australia, visiting aboriginal settlements.

It was on a Sunday when I went to La Perouse, and a Sunday-school class was in session in the main hall. After Mr. Miles had allowed me to photograph the children he took me over to his printing shop. I saw a number of booklets printed in simple English, and even a couple in native languages, mostly dealing with Christian teaching and Bible stories. 'Words to make you happy', the front cover of one illustrated pamphlet reads. The last page shows an aboriginal woman sobbing over the body of her dead baby, and her husband bending over her with an open Bible in his hand, comforting her.

'Make each other very happy with these words', is the caption, followed by a Bible reference for the reader to look up.

Mr. Miles, a dark-haired, lean and reserved man, told me what he thought to be the answer to the plight of the Australian aborigines.

'You may want to know that the dark people [as he always calls them] can make very good Christians. Many of them have faith in Christ. When they really dedicate their lives they make better Christians than Australians. In Singleton there is a Bible college where they come for training before going out to work among their own people, and very good

missionaries they make indeed.

'The answer to their problems is not in little camps and settlements like this. When they are out of work they get together here and there is a lot of gambling, drinking and immorality. The government should let them integrate and live with other Australians. It is unwise to confine them on the reservation, where they have to make no effort to improve their lot.

'Christ says that if the heart is changed a new life can begin for that person. As the dark people are now living, there is always the tendency to revert to their previous way of life, as the environment is no help. Our government, I must admit, is certainly not doing enough for them.'

At the state office of the Aboriginal Welfare Board in Sydney I met its director, Mr. Jack Green. For aboriginal affairs he is directly responsible to the government's Chief Secretary and to Parliament.

'We know that the conditions of these people are bad, especially in places like Tabulum Reserve, where there is no electricity or piped water, and where hookworm is common. We are doing our best to improve their living conditions. In Parliament this week a law which forbids aborigines to drink liquor is being re-read for the purpose of its repeal. We think it will eventually be repealed. Also, we are now constructing new houses for them all over New South Wales.

'These new houses you are building—do the aborigines pay rent?' I asked.

"They have to pay a nominal amount—twenty to forty shillings a week. This is the law and it has nothing to do with me,' he explained.

What is encouraging to observe is that practically every newspaper in Australia is on the backs of the state and federal governments, demanding better treatment of the aborigines. One such paper is the *Sydney Morning Herald*. It carried a thought-provoking editorial in its 4 March 1963 issue:

'President Kennedy's request to the U.S. Congress for approval of legislation designed to fight anti-Negro discrimination will have been noted with interest in this part of the world. It should also serve to focus Australians' attention on the type of discrimination—both official and unofficial—practised against their own aborigines.'

The *Herald's* editorial further commented on 'two objectionable clauses in the Commonwealth [country of Australia] Constitution'. It reads:

'One of them provides that aborigines shall not be counted at any census. This is anachronistic. .. . A good deal more educational integration is needed. The New South Wales Teachers' Federation understandably called on the Education Department to abolish separate schools for

aborigines. The better educated they are, the easier they will find it to secure permanent rather than seasonal work and be accepted on equal terms by the white community.'

The government admits that whenever a census is taken aborigines are excluded from the count. However, it estimates that the combined population of the full-bloods and mixed bloods (half-castes) is about 100,000 throughout Australia. Out of this number only about 38,000 are full-blooded aborigines. From this it can be seen that the white settlers went to a lot of trouble not only to exterminate the male population but to make a good job of 'mixing' with the aboriginal women.

In every Australian state, both full-blooded and part aborigines are forbidden to buy or drink liquor. They have no franchise, neither are they citizens with full citizenship rights, unless they apply for same and fulfil certain requirements. Once they are citizens they are forbidden to live on an aboriginal reserve or to share liquor with other aborigines. These regulations cut right across their ancient tribal customs of sharing and communal ownership.

While the government does everything to educate the half-caste in the regular school system or in special schools, full blooded aborigines who live nomadic lives in the outback are neglected and uncared for. As he is a true primitive, the aboriginal avoids white settlements as far as possible.

A few full-blooded aborigines are known who made names for themselves. One, who died in 1959, was the painter Albert Namatjira. He was a famed water-colour artist and died a sad and broken-hearted man. The story of Namatjira, the first aboriginal to shake hands with Queen Elizabeth (in 1944), is, as *The Times* stated, 'controversial and tragic'.

Albert Namatjira died in 1959 at the age of fifty-seven and at the height of his career as an artist with international recognition.

The story of his rise to fame came to a climax in 1956 when he was invited to exhibit his works and was subsequently showered with honours in Sydney in recognition of his achievement. It was a highly successful visit and Namatjira returned to his central Australian home with many gifts, including a car and refrigerator. Everybody was impressed by his charm and modest personality.

The Australian Government, to reward his talent, granted him full citizenship, which he had not enjoyed in the past in the land of his birth. This automatically allowed him to buy liquor and to travel all over Australia when and if he wanted to do so.

In October 1958, while enjoying his new liberty and freedom as an Australian citizen, he was arrested by the police. His crime was that he shared and drank beer with his fellow aborigines who had not citizenship rights. He was sent to jail for six months.

In March 1959 he was transferred from prison to Papunya, an aboriginal reserve. This action filled him with dejection and wrote the last chapter to his life. He died in Alice Springs Hospital on 8 August 1959. He was an aborigine who almost made it.

Another instance among these remote cases is that of Miss Ruth Daylight, a full-blooded aboriginal plucked from the backwoods of her primitive way of life and brought into the limelight of the 'white man' civilization in order to meet the Queen in 1954. As one Australian columnist put it:

'She bore the change with a natural dignity that few people have. No one could have disliked Ruth Daylight. At the Australian Inland Mission in Hall's Creek, where her parents worked and where she went to school, she was considered outstanding. She lived in a hut at the back of the Mission, but, unless there was a good reason, Ruth never missed school.'

The third aboriginal I would like to mention is Captain Reg Saunders. He, in fact, shows not only to Australians but to the world that, granted the opportunity, an aboriginal can do just as well as any white Australian. He was an officer in the U.N. Army and served after the Second World War in Palestine, Korea, Greece, Crete and New Guinea. I have not met him, and the following quotations are taken from his biography.

The book, *The Embarrassing Australian*, is by a white Australian journalist Mr. Harry Gordon, and is completely based on Captain Saunders' war activities. It is 'the story of an aboriginal warrior ... who became the only member of that race ever to be commissioned as an officer in the armed forces. In Korea he commanded 200 white troops.'

The author, recalling a conversation he had with Reg Saunders in July 1962 at the town of St. Mary's, New South Wales, quotes Saunders' statements in reply to some questions put to him.

'No, you can't say there's much of a colour problem in Australia. The settlers did too effective a job of wiping the natives out. A few thousand people who live little better than animals can't constitute much of a problem, can they?'

To educate liberal-minded white Australians, if he had the money, Saunders suggested:

'What would I do? I'd show films to white people, on the way aboriginals are living in this Australia of ours, here and now. I'd show them pictures of kids gnawing half-cooked kangaroo legs, absolutely covered with flies. I'd force investigations into the way natives are treated in towns like Moree and Kempsey.

'I'd let everyone know what happens in North Queensland, where aboriginals who go to the movies have to sit in a roped off enclosure, even though they pay the same

admission fee as other people. Or the towns where they're not allowed to use the same swimming-pools as the whites, or the towns like Elliot, where the white parents were able to keep their kids away from school.

'At Blacktown, just down the line from here, thirty aboriginals are living in two tin sheds that were used for storing pig-fodder. They have a dirt floor, and there are nineteen kids among them. Some of the children have been attacked by rats from a garbage-tip nearby.'

These are just a few extracts from Chapter 14 of Gordon's book.

Where else, except in this supposedly civilized country, are the conditions of black-skinned people worse? South Africa or the southern states of America? I for one doubt it.

While the country's government deserves to be praised for Australia's politically stable and democratic way of life and for its unrelenting and revolutionary efforts to make the new nation highly productive, for the aborigines, the indigenous inhabitants, it's a different story. For this minority group and race, Australia is a land of sorrow and misery.

It must be pointed out that the average Australian (himself an undiscriminating and sociable mixer) cannot be accused of this inhumane blunder. Only the state and federal

governments can be blamed for the still primitive and unhealthy conditions to which the aborigines are subjected.

The indigenous aborigines, in their own land, live the lives of outcasts and untouchables. While surprisingly enough they are not made the subject of ridicule, they have become cherished pets and human antiques, proudly displayed in their natural museum as the offshoots of a dying and forgotten race.

The prevalent belief of governments, past and present, is that the aborigines are unhealthy, degenerate, incapable of reasoning and unable to mix and live a city life. Such an attitude, based on misunderstanding, is without foundation in fact. Aborigines are supposed to lack the necessary attributes as human beings, to work out their own integration, yet they are subject to the Australian laws for any crime committed either in the bush or in the environs of the city.

If Britain during her colonial days was able to succeed in civilizing and educating the people of her once colonial territories in Africa and Asia, much against their wishes in those days, admittedly by iron hand yet fatherly ruthless devices, why, then, can't the Australian Government grant full citizenship to the aborigines, with only this string attached, that it will be within her legal right to introduce drastic action in her desperate effort to reform them? This Australia can do if she so keenly has the welfare of these

underprivileged people at heart, as Britain had with her colonies.

An Australian educationalist, medical doctor or social worker would prefer to work in some country in Africa or Asia then to discharge such a duty among the aborigines in Australia, because, according to him, 'the aborigines are dormant, uninspiring people to work with'. This, anyone will admit, is a callous contention. The 'wind of change' has certainly not dawned on the Australian people in this aspect.

It would be despondent and grossly presumptuous, of course, to assume that the failure of the government to find a solution to the problem is based on the hysteria of hate, racial consciousness or prejudice against aborigines. This is far from the case.

The cardinal reason, I believe, is one of nationalistic pride, fear and ignorance on the part of the government.

The average Australian will not hesitate to tell you that it is the aboriginal himself who should carry most of the blame for his backwardness, his uncivilized and still primitive way of life. One will further be told that the aboriginal lacks the incentive, energy, ability, appreciation and responsibility necessary for assimilation and integration, in comparison with, say, an African or an American Negro.

Often in the course of discussions some of my Australian friends have pointed out to me that the aboriginal does not want to have anything, socially or otherwise, to do with the white Australian. He objects to being schooled, medically cared for and orientated into civilized ways. In my opinion these are shallow and even depraved conjectures, which, even if containing some element of truth, must not be condoned, especially by the government.

The Australian Government, like a lone wolf, spends millions of pounds (something like £10,000,000) each year on Asian countries, without any strings attached, financing dams, giant electricity projects, factories, technical schools and other educational institutions, and hospitals.

I have often been told by experts that the problem is too complex for a simple solution. However, I believe one measure is urgently needed for these aborigines, who are falling into the pit of oblivion and degeneration, and whose population is rapidly diminishing. This measure is the introduction of mass education, coupled with the immediate introduction of a federal law granting them full citizenship.

The future aid going from Australia to the African and Asian countries could be curtailed and diverted to these educational and housing programmes. No doubt Africans and Asians will appreciate and praise the Australian Government's efforts if she undertakes this demanding

humanitarian task to relieve the subsistent living conditions of the aborigines.

As I see it, if this horrifying neglect continues, sooner or later this question of the aborigines in Australia is sure to explode and take a dramatic turn, probably as a result of outside pressure.

To avoid any future unpleasant embarrassment to Australia, the earlier the government wakes up and makes an exhaustive, humane effort to put her house in order, the better it will be, both for the people concerned and for the white inhabitants of this peace- loving country.

From the last page of *Our Aborigines*, a booklet issued by the Australian Minister for Territories and Ministers responsible for Aboriginal welfare in connection with the celebration of Aborigines' Day in Australia, I quote this appropriate statement:

'The remarkable achievement of bodies such as the "Good Neighbour Councils" in helping to assimilate the "New Australians" from overseas might well be matched by communal and individual efforts to help the

"Old Australians" to realize the best of our own life and the best of their own individual capacities.'

27 *The Australian*

ADMITTEDLY, the months I have spent in Australia have not made me an authority on the life of its people. However, I often wonder about the mentality and pride of the average Australian, and have mixed feelings of sympathy for him and of dislike for his attitudes.

It is a common saying, particularly by critics of Australia, that its people are living in a 'fool's paradise', an insular world of fantasy. I for one have no reason to believe this to be true. Isolated and remote a place it may be, but it has much to offer the world.

Australia remains a vast, difficult land, with most of her population living in the coastal region, where there is regular rainfall. She is largely a primary producer—wool, wheat and minerals—and there is a constant search for further mineral deposits. Because of her small population and huge area, with its sparse rainfall, she has been unable to develop her resources fully and is desperately trying to do this, with the help of foreign investments in such projects as the Snowy River Conservation Scheme and the Moonee Ponds oil- wells.

The British financier Mr. Charles Clore has recently been visiting the country. At Sydney Airport he was talking to journalists on his impressions of Australia.

'This is God's own country and whoever does not invest in it is crazy. I am very impressed with what I have seen in Australia, but I think you are too parochial here. Too narrowminded' (see *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 February 1963).

Of its inhabitants, it seems to me that the Australian is more an ignoramus than a snob. True, he is socially a good mixer and is always willing to have a good time, but when it comes to what is happening around him and outside his society he doesn't give a darn. 'Let Bob Menzies and Barwick worry about that. That's what we pay them for.'

What one can appreciate is the hospitality and unsophisticated manners of the Australian, especially when he approaches a foreigner for the first time. As he walks along the street, the visitor is often stopped and invited to 'come along for a glass of beer', whether he likes it or not, by a complete stranger. This has happened to me a number of times.

At the pub, during the course of informal conversation your kind-hearted and sociable host demands to know your impressions of Australia— whether you like the people, and are happy about the country.

For the Australian's new-found friend to say anything except 'Australia is a fabulous place' will not only make him insane in the eyes of his host but will immediately earn him displeasure, suspicion and even open dislike. A visitor to Australia is usually expected to say only good things, both about the place and the people, despite the fact that he might think otherwise.

Another example of this sensitivity involved the writer and Australian journalists. I had written an article on my impressions of Australia, and went along to peddle it to the editor of a magazine. The bespectacled, pipe-smoking editor, after he had read it, gave me every reason to believe that it was 'just the type of article' he had been looking for. He was prepared to publish it.

"This is good material—we might get you to do a few more after this is published,' he assured me.

"I'm glad you like the article. It may sound critical, but I can assure you that it is pure candidness on my part as I see Australia.'

'Don't worry about that. I like it and it will be good for publication. I'll pass it on to my feature editor for further action.'

A few days later a woman phoned me at my flat. She identified herself as a feature editor and asked me to come

over to her office to discuss my article.

She was intelligent and sophisticated, tall, dark- haired and neatly dressed. Somehow I felt uneasy in her presence, although she was trying very hard to make me feel at home.

'Kindly sit down, Mr. Ajala. May I get you a cup of tea?. I sent for you because we want a lead story on you for your article when we use it soon. Perhaps you can tell us something.'

"It's not myself I want to sell, but my work,' I replied. However, we talked for about forty-five minutes, and I left her convinced that I 'had it made'.

'Thank you for coming. Your article should appear in a week or two. You will receive a cheque from us soon by post.'

Two weeks after the meeting, contrary to my expectations, it was not my article that appeared but a long reportage on me. It was headlined in big letters, 'Because My Skin is Black', and was written by the lady feature editor. It carried a sketch of my face, full on. After reading it I suspected that I had been made a victim of unethical journalism, as parts of my article were quoted out of context, without my permission. Here is an extract:

'Mr. Olabisi Ajala, formerly of Nigeria [why 'formerly' I cannot imagine], seems surprised that anyone should be

more interested in him than his manuscript. The manuscript is called "The Australian in Perspective".

'Stories such as these are regularly brought into newspaper offices by members of what might be called the "quick-look" school of journalism, who leave their four-wheel drives or their motor-scooters, covered with the dust and flags of many nations, on half-hour meters.'

The supposedly well-informed interviewer did not stop there, but went on to say:

'But Mr. Ajala, sitting on the opposite side of the desk, is different. His skin is different. His eyes are hidden by very dark glasses, so that, except for the handsome, white smile, his face is monochrome and entirely baffling.' So it goes on with a mixture of praise and insults.

The lady reporter was certainly entitled to her views about me. I had no objection to this, but was concerned about the article, for which I had already received a cheque. I sent a letter to the magazine correcting some of the writer's misconceptions about me, and the letter was published in the following issue, without any comment. A few weeks later I telephoned the editor to ask him when my own article would be published.

'On second thoughts we decided not to use it, as it is considered too critical of Australia, and might offend our readers.'

Unlike an American or Englishman, the Australian is terribly touchy and intolerant of any criticism of his society. While, luckily for me, he does not indulge in physical violence to defend its name, he can be very patriotic, almost fanatical, about his country.

I was disappointed to find that he has little or no sense of humour when the joke involves himself or his country, yet he is unconventional and possesses a refreshingly uninhibited attitude to life.

It is difficult for me to share the usual belief that gambling and drinking are a way of life with the Australian. With a small section of the community this may be true, but it certainly does not hold for the majority of the people.

A visitor to Australia, invited to 'come along for a drink' by his good-natured Australian friend, must be sure to have both the stomach for beer and a few 'bob' in his pocket. He is likely to wind up dead drunk while his Australian 'mate' appears quite fit and sober. Also, the visiting guest will soon find that he is as much the host as the friend who invited him.

Unlike in other countries, it is a custom with Australians to invite someone to a 'beer session' and expect the guest to pay for half the beers or, if in a larger group, to 'shout' the others to a drink when his turn comes. At the words 'Your shout, mate', be prepared to foot the bill for the next round.

I did discover that the Australian lacks appreciation for creativity and for tradition, both of which seem to be missing from his society. That he has confidence in his own ingenuity and creative ability is even questionable.

He has what I call 'colonial mentality'. Goods made in America or Europe are the best, while products made in Australia tend to be the next-best thing, despite the big 'buy Australian' campaign of the last few years.

Australia has a number of famed artistes, writers and painters scattered all over the world, from Joan

Sutherland, Peter Finch and Sidney Nolan to Dorothy and Darcy Niland, Diane Cilento, Jon Cleary, Robert Helpmann and Cyril Richards. Many such artists struggled in London, Paris and New York in order to be recognized. After this has been achieved they make front-page news in their own country.

By this time they have become integrated into Europe's cultural and literary life. Most of these Australian-born artists abroad had to leave home due to lack of opportunity and appreciation in their own country. And, once they have made a name for themselves abroad, they shudder at the thought of coming back to settle down here. In this respect they are not so much to blame as the society they had to leave behind in order to seek recognition abroad.

There is the case of an Australian friend of mine whom I met in Sydney. A few years ago he started writing short stories, and tried to sell them to local newspapers and magazines. None was interested. 'Your stories are not subtle enough,' he was told. Later he sent a couple of them to the London *Observer*, confident that they would be rejected. Contrary to his expectation, they were accepted for publication. He was encouraged to send more. Soon enough, some of the Australians he had approached noticed that his works were being published in London. Two of them had the nerve to ask him to discontinue his London commitments and write for them instead. His reply was:

'Thank you for your offers, but I would suggest that if you want any of my work published in your paper you should deal with the London journals, they have the exclusive rights.'

Now occasionally I see his work reproduced here in Australia.

Instead of Australia encouraging and using its local talent, which is as good as any in the world, entertainers with established names are imported from Europe and America at fabulous salaries.

It was in *Life* magazine of 4 June 1962 that I was reading an article by an Australian writer:

'Australian singers are some of our most successful and prosperous representatives abroad. Local actors have to depend on radio and television for a living, and local playwrights have an equally thin time of it. The only art which has achieved a high standard of general cultivation is cooking.'

The country's industry, despite its rapid boom, mostly depends on investment and capital from America and other foreign countries—a disadvantage when, as in many cases, huge profits are being channelled away from Australia.

For a nation on the march, the pace of industrial progress is quite slow and poor. Most of the profits are directed outside, and if a company needs a million or so to develop a project or start a venture it does not seek the money in Australia but is forced to make the rounds of Exchanges in New York, London, Paris or Bonn.

The Australian business man does not want to risk his money in ventures within his country. He does not believe in adventurous expansion of his own business either.

When you meet young people and the 'intelligentsia' you receive the impression that anyone who has not been to Europe or America has not seen much of 'life' as yet. Their craving ambition is to go abroad. Once this has been achieved, they feel properly 'cultured' and 'educated'.

It is common to hear people, particularly in the upper middle class and social set, say something like this: 'I am returning to Europe next year. I just came back to see a few friends.'

The struggling white-collar clerk or clerk-typist in some office will tell you that 'Australia is a boring place. I'm saving to go to England.' Such an aim is based not so much on boredom as on ignorance, inferiority complex and shallow thinking.

What is there in America and Britain that cannot be found in modern Australia?' I have often asked myself. It is certainly not material gain, which is only too evident in Australia. Can it be glamour, the arts or even beautiful scenery? Any of these can be found in Australia. The women are beautiful and dress well. Few countries in Europe can match the natural beauty which Australia has to offer, ranging from beach to bush, ocean views to green or snow-covered mountains, as well as a variety of healthy climates.

While the number of unemployed in Europe and America is rising threateningly, Australia is providing work in heavy industry and developmental projects in every state.

Despite all these gifts of nature and material possessions, I still feel there is a craze and urge for anything foreign.

The 'New Australian', many of them made up of immigrants who have escaped from behind the 'Iron Curtain' and come from such countries as Italy, Spain and Holland, find no difficulty in adjusting themselves to life in Australia. They have entered every trade and profession, and many run small grocery and provision shops in towns and cities. They usually keep within their own national community.

What opinion does the Australian hold on the questions of 'White Australia' policy and the integration of aborigines? Opinions differ widely on these subjects. A large percentage feel that people wanting to immigrate should not be refused because of the colour of their skin or their race.

On one occasion I was visiting a photographic shop in Sydney in the centre of the city called Cameraland. A full blooded aboriginal friend of mine, Allan Moary Waalla, came with me. This friend had told me that he wanted to travel to Paris to further his musical career, but was refused a passport by the government, as he was not yet a 'citizen' of Australia.

Inside the shop there were about six camera enthusiasts. When we entered they looked at us in a friendly manner.

'What can we do for you fellows?' a bespectacled, lean-figured man enquired.

'Just a roll of film,' I said.

He fetched the film and asked if we wanted anything else. As we needed nothing more, we gave him a pound note and gazed at the cameras on display, waiting for the change. The man soon returned.

'I know your friend here is an aborigine, but where do you come from—Fiji?'

I corrected him.

'Oh, Nigeria. That's a British colony, isn't it? I suppose that by 1970 you'll be independent. It took Australia more than a hundred years to be independent from Britain.'

'In 1970 Nigeria will be ten years old,' I said.

'But what do you mean—aren't you still a British colony?'

'No, brother, we became independent in 1960.'

"You must forgive me for my ignorance, I was thinking of Liberia.' It was no use my trying to educate him. Liberia was formerly an American colony and has long been independent even before he or I were born.

One of the three gentlemen behind the counter came over to us. 'I am the manager, and this gentleman is my

associate.' We shook hands all round as I introduced Allan to them.

'How are you enjoying your stay in Australia?' the manager enquired. In order to avoid any unpleasant argument, I was noncommittal.

'I'm still finding out.'

'Well, that's good. You will find that this is a good country, the best in the world. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.'

I agreed.

The associate was next to talk. 'Who is your aboriginal friend?'

'Allan is a friend I met last night at George's pub; you know, the bar near Pyrmont Bridge. He plays the guitar and sings there.'

'We'd sure like to hear him play for us some time.'

Allan answered: 'Sure, that could be arranged. Just come down to the pub. Only, when you come there don't call me an "abo", but a Malayan.'

'Why should I call you a Malayan when you are an aboriginal?'

'Because the police musn't find out that I go into any public bar, because I'm an aboriginal darkie. My friend here can go because he comes from Africa, so can a Malayan or any darkie foreigner.'

The shop attendants got the message.

'You know, Allan,' started the manager, 'white people in this country have nothing against aborigines. It's the government, and we are all for the changing of these discriminatory laws against aborigines. We're all the same, and you're human beings, just like us.'

I entered the conversation. 'How about the "White Australia" policy? I gather that it is to stop Asians coming to Australia?'

That's what everyone says. Again, it's a question of the government,' said the manager.

His associate wanted to say his bit. 'No one cares who comes here. It's a free country and we all think that everyone should be allowed to come to Australia, only there ought to be some kind of control, not based on colour or race, of course.'

'What kind of control do you mean, then?' Allan asked.

'You know, to guard against communists and political saboteurs. It's not Indonesia that wants Australia, I say it's

Red China and Russia. We have to be on our guard against that bloody lot.'

"I spent some years in Indonesia, and I know them well,' this from the manager again. 'We want to be friends with Indonesia, but we're sick of Soekarno's sabre-rattling and threats. Who in the hell does he think he is? We want to be friends with our neighbours, but certainly not at the cost of our prestige. The Russians supply Soekarno with all kinds of modern weapons, and Australia is supposed to keep quiet. We won't bloody well do that,' he assured us.

A group of Australian churchmen who went on a visit to Indonesia have an optimistic view on Australian-Indonesian relationships. The Rev. J. M. Stuckey, Presbyterian leader of the Australian Council of Churches' delegation to Indonesia, says:

'In our conversations with Indonesian people, the desire for firm friendship with the Australian people individually and as a whole was expressed.'

I feel I must make some concluding remarks about the 'White Australia' policy.

With due respect to Sir Garfield Barwick, I must say that I find it difficult to reconcile some of his statements about the policy with those set down in the government White Papers. Australia's Minister for Immigration, Mr. A. R. Downer,

speaking in the Federal Parliament on 18 May 1962, openly admitted:

'. . . in general, persons not of European descent are not eligible to enter Australia for permanent residence.' This is quoted from *Hansard*, pages 1563 ff. It contradicts Sir Garfield's statement on the same subject.

A number of public-opinion polls have been conducted in Australia on this 'White Australia' policy. Many people have been in favour of admitting members of other races. It was reported in the *Melbourne Herald* of 4 November 1961 that 57% were in favour, 32% against, while 11% were undecided. The result of this poll cannot be said to be very encouraging, but it is interesting to know the attitude of the public.

The *Guardian* commented as follows in its issue of 15 March 1963 on the policy:

'Australia's post-war immigration programme has justly been applauded for its breadth and foresight. Yet it retains one notable defect from early days in its almost total exclusion of non-Europeans.'

The newspaper continues: 'But public pressure against the "White Australia" policy has lately increased, mainly from Churches, teachers and students. The fiercest opponents of it have suggested that Asians should be granted entry on the

same terms as migrants from Britain—that is, virtually unlimited.

'There are more prudent courses and the best of them has been advanced by members of the non-party Immigration Reform Group, who suggest that: "... Australia's capacity to assimilate completely the nationals concerned should be the sole criterion in fixing numbers. It is suggested that for an experimental period of five years the total intake from Asia should not exceed 1,500 a year."'

What could be a more rational evaluation of and answer to the present problem than this plan?

I should like to comment further on the Australian Government's lukewarm attitude towards the Asian countries. An article from the *Observer* on Australia's foreign policy was reprinted by an Australian national magazine *The Bulletin* in the 16 June 1962 issue:

'In foreign policy Mr. Menzies has sensibly turned more and more to the United States for defence, but his obvious lack of interest and ill-concealed contempt for the new countries of Asia has left Australia dangerously isolated.'

I am of the opinion that the government's attitude is slowly but surely changing for the better. It is craving for closer and better understanding with its neighbours. As Sir Garfield said to reporters on one of his visits to Manila in the Philippines.

'Australia thinks of itself as part of Asia. From now on Australia will always and naturally think of the region [Asia] as being "us" and not "they", of what we can do, what is good for all of us.'

On the whole, my visit to Australia has been very pleasant as well as informative. I have found understanding, immeasurable hospitality and have made many friends, contrary to what I had expected. In fact I have spent more time in Australia than in any other country during my world travels.

However, I think that the Australian is still living in a world of his own—a world of individualism, seclusion and 'do-it-yourself'. He does not live in the past, nor look much to the future, but indulges strictly in the present.

During his visit to London in June 1963, Sir Robert Menzies was interviewed on a B.B.C. television programme. Among many questions asked Sir Robert by the interviewer, Mr. Robin Day, was his opinion on the 'White Australia' policy. His reply left no doubt in the mind of the television audience that he was all for it. In essence, his comment was as follows:

'We do not call it the "White Australia" policy, but a restrictive immigration policy. This policy is designed to keep Australia's racial homogeneity, to avoid racial trouble such as we find in America and South Africa.'

Sir Robert did not explain what he really meant by keeping 'Australia's racial homogeneity'. There are in Australia aborigines whose colour of skin, culture and racial origins are in great contrast with those of 'white' Australians.

The interviewer, who a few months earlier had visited Australia, pointed out that he had noticed a large section of Australians campaigning against the 'White Australia' policy, particularly among the youth.

'That is quite correct. They are mostly from the Universities and Church organizations,' Prime Minister Menzies admitted.

What made interesting reading for me on this subject was an informative book entitled *Immigration: Control or Colour Bar?*. It was compiled by an independent body known as the Immigration Reform Group and edited by Dr. Kenneth Rivett, a lecturer in Economics at the University of New South Wales, Sydney. This book relates the background to 'White Australia' and presents a sane proposal for reform.

It suggests that non-Europeans should be admitted to Australia as immigrants on a flexible system which takes into account what the Group regards as 'four danger points'. These points are 'economic competition, concentration in low status jobs, housing congestion and failure to integrate satisfactorily with the rest of the

community. ... We need a policy that is courageous but also cautious'.